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THE

# INSTRUCTION of YOUTH

IN

# CHRISTIAN PIETY.

TAKEN OUT OF THE

Sacred Scriptures and Holy Fathers.

From the FRENCH

OF

CHARLES GOBINET, D. D.

VOL. I.

The FOURTH EDITION.

*To give ſubtilty to little ones, to the young man knowledge and underſtanding. A wiſe man ſhall hear, and ſhall be wiſer.* Prov. i. 4, 5.




*NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE:*

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# A DEDICATORY PRAYER TO THE SON of GOD.

*TO thee, O Saviour of ſouls, according to my duty and inclination, do I conſecrate this work. It came from thee, and it ought to return to thee. In offering it to thee, I reſtore a thing which by all manner of titles appertains to thee. Thy grace has aſſiſted me in compoſing it, by the particular helps which I have received from thee in this ſmall labour. That fervent zeal which thou waſt pleaſed ſo frequently to manifeſt for the ſalvation of youth, when thou waſt upon earth, has given birth to this deſign, and the hope I had of thy ſuccour, inſpired me with confidence to undertake it. Let not my miſery prevent the effects of thy bounty, nor hinder thy pious inſtructions from producing in ſouls that fruit they ought to bring forth. Divine* JESUS! *animate with thy holy ſpirit the words of this book. Cauſe them, for whom it is written, to acknowledge, in reading it, their ſtrict obligations of ſerving thee, and thy earneſt deſire of their ſalvation. Speak thou to their hearts at the ſame time that theſe words inform their eyes, and inſpire them by the influence of thy grace, with a reliſh for thoſe ſalutary documents, which thou haſt communicated to me. It behoves thee now rather than at any other time, to make the effects of thy mercy appear upon young people.* It is time, O Lord, to do, they have diſſipated thy law *. *The greater part of them abandon thee, when they ſhould begin to ſerve thee. They forget that ſolemn promiſe they made thee at baptiſm, and the ineſtimable favours they have received from thy infinite goodneſs. O divine Saviour! Let not thoſe ſouls be loſt, which thou haſt redeemed with thy precious blood, and for the ſalvation of which thou haſt teſtified ſo great love. Reſerve them for thy ſervice; hinder them from bending their knees before* Baal, *and from being corrupted by the infection of this perverſe age. Make that zeal which thou haſt for the ſalvation of youth, revive in thy prieſts, and grant me the grace, which I moſt humbly implore, ſo faithfully to employ my pains and labours in aſſiſting young people, that I may promote thy glory.*



* Pſalm cxviii. 126.

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# PREFACE.

*THE intent of a* preface *is to inform the reader, either of the design of the author, or of the occasion which gave birth to the work, or of the order and method that is observed therein, or of the profit that may be reaped, or of some such thing. As for my design, it is no other than what the title of the book imports, to instruct youth in piety. This is all I aim and aspire at. The occasion of undertaking it was, my being called to the direction of youth, when I endeavoured to qualify myself for so important an employment, and to answer the pious intentions of those who entrusted me with such a charge. Now in labouring to instruct myself, I found that what I had prepared for my own use might serve for the instruction of youth, if it were reduced into method. I have therefore disposed it into the method you see, wherein I treat of five things, which seemed to me the most necessary for giving young people a complete instruction in piety,* 1. *The motives which oblige them thereto.* 2. *The means they ought to employ to obtain it.* 3. *The obstacles and difficulties which occur therein.* 4. *The virtues which are peculiar to their age.* 5. *The importance of making a good choice of a state of life, and the means to perform it in a due manner. Which last is a subject little known by young people, and still less practised.*

*As to the profitableness of this book, dear reader, it is not my part, but yours to judge of it. The end for which it is composed, which is the instruction of youth, will make you esteem it useful. The matter of it, which is chiefly taken out of the sacred scripture and holy fathers, will cause you to form the same judgment. If the method I have observed appear easy, it will give the final decision.*

*I write for young people: for them have I composed this work, and particularly for those whom God has pleased to commit to my charge. If others more advanced in age take the pains to read it, I desire they will peruse it with the spirit of charity, excusing what they shall find defective in it, and receiving kindly what they shall find good. I exhort you, dear reader, to improve yourself by this small labour which I have undertaken for your salvation. I call you in this instruction by the name of* Theotime, *which word signifies* a soul that honours God; *because I consider you in that state, or at least willing*

*to*

*to attain it. Read then with this ſpirit and deſire. Read to be inſtructed there concerning your ſalvation, and to learn therein betimes what you are to do during the whole courſe of your life, that is, to ſerve him to whom you are indebted for every thing you poſſeſs. And laſtly, that you may receive ſome ſolid advantage from this book, I beg two things.*

*Firſt, that you read it with three conditions; with a deſire to learn, with attention, and with order.*

*Secondly, that you will conſider it is not I who ſpeak to you, but God, by the divine inſtructions he has given us in the ſacred ſcripture, and in the writings of the holy fathers. Read it therefore with all the reſpect, which is due to that adorable maſter; and in theſe ſacred fountains ſearch for true wiſdom, without which all other things are but folly. Happy you, if you ſearch for it as you ought, and if you can one day ſay with one of the wiſeſt of men*, that having ſearched for wiſdom during your youth, you have found it, and made daily progreſs in it. You will, as he did, give all the glory to God, who is the author thereof:* To him that giveth me wiſdom will I give glory †; *you will alſo reap an advantage, which will continue with you for all eternity.*

## Advice concerning the preſent edition.

*In the former editions of this work, the Scripture texts were often wrong quoted and their tranſlation inaccurate: in this, ſuch miſtakes have been rectified, and the verſion of the Doway Bible ſubſtituted. There has been added a ſmall eſſay upon prayer, extracted from a treatiſe upon the ſame ſubject which was publiſhed as a ſupplement to this* INSTRUCTION OF YOUTH *by the Author. Some few other alterations have been made, all which are, with due reſpect, ſubmitted to the judgment of the candid reader.*

PRAYERS

* Eccli. li. † Eccluſ. li. 23.

# PRAYERS

## To be ſaid before and after reading any Book of Piety.

### *A Prayer before Reading.*

O GOD, who haſt taught the hearts of the faithful by the light of the holy ſpirit, grant that we may, by the gift of the ſame ſpirit, be always truly wiſe, and ever feel that joy, which is the effect of his holy conſolation: through *Jeſus Chriſt* our Lord. *Amen.*

### *A Prayer after Reading.*

GRANT us, we beſeech thee, O Lord, the help of thy grace, that what by thy inſtruction we know is to be done, by thy aſſiſtance we may perfectly accompliſh: through *Jeſus Chriſt* our Lord. *Amen.*

# THE CONTENTS OF THE First VOLUME.

## PART I.

THE reaſons and motives which oblige men to apply themſelves to virtue in their youth *Page* 1
*Chap.* i. The end for which man is created *ibid.*
*Chap.* ii. Of our vocation to the grace of baptiſm, and of its obligations 4
*Article* 1. Of the excellence of the ſtate of a Chriſtian, and of the favour God beſtows on him whom he calls to this ſtate 5
*Article* 2. Of the great obligations of a Chriſtian 7
*Chap.* iii. That God requires, and particularly accepts the ſervice of young people 9
*Chap.* iv. That God particularly loves young people, and delights to beſtow many favours upon them 11
*Chap.* v. That they who do not conſecrate themſelves to God in their youth, offer him a moſt heinous injury 13
*Chap.* vi. Remarkable inſtances of the averſion God bears to wicked young people 16
*Chap.* vii. That ſalvation generally depends on the time of youth 19
*Chap.* viii. That thoſe who have followed virtue in their youth, generally perſevere in it the reſt of their life 21
*Chap.* ix. This truth confirmed by remarkable examples, taken out of ſacred ſcripture, of thoſe who having been virtuous in their youth, continued ſo all their life 23
*Chap.* x. That thoſe who have been addicted to vice in their youth, amend with great difficulty, and often never 27
*Chap.* xi. Examples of thoſe who have corrected the vices of their youth, yet with very great difficulty 30
*Chap.* xii. Examples of thoſe who have never corrected the vices of their youth 34
*Chap.* xiii. Of the great evils which ſpring from a wicked youth 37
*Article* 1. The firſt evil, *viz.* death, which the ſins of youth haſten in many *ibid.*
*Article* 2. The ſecond evil which ſprings from ſins committed in youth; blindneſs of mind, and obduratenes in vice 39
*Article* 3. the third evil, the loſs of many fair hopes 40
*Article* 4. The fourth evil ſpringing from the ſins of youth, the exceſs of vice amongſt men 42
*Chap.* xiv. That the Devil uſes all his endeavours to lead young people into vice 44
*Chap.* xv. The concluſion of all that has been ſaid in this firſt part 46

PART

## PART II.

OF the necessary means of acquiring virtue during youth *Page* 49
*Chap.* i. Wherein true virtue consists *ibid.*
*Chap.* ii. That to acquire virtue we must desire it 51
*Chap.* iii. Of prayer, the third means of acquiring virtue 52
*Chap.* iv. That we must love and seek after instruction 54
*Chap.* v. Of the necessity of a guide in the way of virtue, and particularly during youth 55
*Chap.* vi. Of a general confession 57
*Chap.* vii. Of ordinary confession 60
*Chap.* viii Important advice concerning confession 62
*Chap.* ix. Of holy communion 64
*Chap.* x. Advice for communicating well 65
*Chap.* xi. Of morning prayer 67
*Chap.* xii. Of evening prayer 69
*Chap.* xiii. Of assisting devoutly at the holy sacrifice of the altar 70
*Chap.* xiv. Of labour and employment of time 72
*Chap.* xv. Of the knowledge of one's self, very necessary for young people 73
*Chap.* xvi. Of the reading of pious books 76
*Chap.* xvii. Advice against bad books 78
*Chap.* xviii. Of pious conversation 79
*Chap.* xix. Of devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and St. *Joseph* 81
*Chap.* xx. Of devotion to the angel guardian, and to the saint of one's name 84
*Chap.* xxi. Of keeping festivals, and particularly *Sundays* 86
*Chap.* xxii. Of going to the parish 90

## PART III.

OF the obstacles which withdraw young persons from virtue *Page* 94
*Chap.* i. The first obstacle to the salvation of youth, the want of instruction 95
*Chap.* ii. The second obstacle, the too much indulgence of parents, their ill example, and the bad instruction they give their children 96
*Chap.* iii. The third obstacle to the salvation of youth, untractableness 98
*Chap.* iv. the fourth obstacle, inconstancy 101
*Chap.* v. The fifth obstacle, the shame of doing good 102
*Chap.* vi. The sixth obstacle, wicked company 104
*Article* 1. How hurtful it is *ibid.*
*Article* 2. Two things pernicious in wicked company, discourse and example 106
*Article* 3. Of four sorts of wicked companions which must be avoided 107
*Chap.* vii. The seventh obstacle to the salvation of youth, idleness 109
*Chap.* viii. The eighth obstacle, impurity 112
*Article* 1. That the sin of impurity is the greatest enemy to youth, and damns more than all other vices together *ibid.*
*Article* 2. Of the sad effects of the sin of impurity 114
*Article* 3. Examples of the miserable death of those who were addicted to the sin of impurity 117
*Article* 4. The first remedy against impurity, is to resist this sin at the beginning 120
*Article* 5. The second remedy to avoid the causes of impurity 121
*Article* 6. Other particular remedies against impurity 123
*Chap.* ix. Of temptations 125
*Article* 1. What temptation is, and of the means to know whether one hath sinned during a temptation *ib.*
*Article* 2. That one cannot avoid being tempted, and that we must be prepared betimes to resist temptations 126
*Article* 3. Considerations to fortify the mind in temptations 128

*Article*

*Article* 4. How we must behave in temptations 130
*Article* 5. Of some artifices by which the Devil deceives men in temptations, especially youth 132
*Article* 6. Of two considerable faults usual with young persons in temptations 134
*Article* 7. What is to be done after the temptation is overcome 136
*Article* 8. A remarkable example to teach us how we must encounter temptations 137
*Chap.* x. Obstacles peculiar to rich young persons 139
*Chap.* xi. Obstacles peculiar to gentry 142

## PART IV.

OF the virtues necessary for young persons *Page* 147
*Chap.* i. That young people ought to propose to themselves the example of our Lord *Jesus* in his youth *ibid.*
*Chap.* ii. Of the fear of God 149
*Chap.* iii. Of the love of God 151
*Chap.* iv. Of the love of parents 153
*Chap.* v. Of other persons whom youth ought to honour 156
*Chap.* vi. Of tractableness 157
*Chap.* vii. Of obedience 158
*Chap.* viii. Of Chastity 159
*Chap.* ix. Of bashfulness 161
*Chap.* x. Of modesty 162
*Chap.* xi. Of modesty in words 165
*Chap.* xii. Of other vices of the tongue, and particularly of swearing 166
Of detraction 168
Of injuries and reproaches 169
Of sowers of discord 170
Of lying 171
*Chap.* xiii. Of sobriety 173
*Chap.* xiv. Of meekness in opposition to anger 175
Remedies against anger 177
*Chap.* xv. Of peace without neighbour, against quarrels and enmities 178
*Chap.* xvi. Of pardoning injuries, against revenge 180
*Chap.* xvii. Of the love of our neighbour 183
*Chap.* xviii. Of fraternal correction, or of the obligation of hindering another's sin when in our power 186
*Chap.* xix. Of friendships 191
*Chap.* xx. Of sports and recreations 193
*Chap.* xxi. Of liberality against covetousness 195
*Chap.* xxii. Of charity towards the poor 198
*Chap.* xxiii. Of humility 201

## PART V.

OF the choice of a state of life *Page* 205
*Chap.* i. How important it is to make a good choice of a state of life *ibid.*
*Chap.* ii. Of the faults that are usually committed by youth in this choice 207
*Chap.* iii. Advice to parents concerning the vocation of their children 209
*Chap.* iv. Of the different states of life, and first of the ecclesiastical state 213
*Article* 1. Of the obligations and dangers of an ecclesiastical state *ibid.*
*Article* 2. Of the vocation to an ecclesiastical state 216
*Article* 3. Of the preparation necessary for an ecclesiastical state 218
*Chap.* v. Of a religious state 221
*Article* 1. What a religious state is; its obligations, advantages and dangers *ibid.*
*Article* 2. How to know whether one be called to a religious state 222
*Chap.* vi. Of the divers states of a secular life 224

*Chap.* vii. Of the ſtate of marriage 229
*Article* 1. What we muſt know of a married life *ibid.*
*Article* 2. The neceſſary diſpoſitions for a married ſtate 231
*Article* 3. The concluſion of the foregoing chapter 136
*Chap.* viii. Of a ſingle life 237
*Chap.* ix. Moſt important advice for young perſons, who begin to enter into the world 241
*Advice* 1. That the time of iſſuing out of youth, and entering into the world, is the moſt dangerous of all our life, and many are ſhipwreckt therein *ibid.*
*Advice* 2. That the chief care of young men, who enter the world, ought to be the preſervation of the ſentiments and practices of piety, which they have obſerved in their youth 243
*Advice* 3. That young men muſt fly wicked company, eſpecially where there is likely to be any freedom of converſation or friendſhip 244
*Advice* 4. That they muſt apply themſelves quickly to ſome buſineſs which may employ their time, and make them avoid idleneſs, which is then more dangerous, than at any other time 235
*Advice* 5. That young people muſt avoid three ordinary cauſes of their ruin at that time, *Play*, *Wine*, and *Impurity* *ibid.*
*Advice* 6. That they muſt avoid at that time irreſolution concerning the ſtate they ought to chooſe, and after the choice, not change eaſily, nor without great reaſon 246
*Advice* 7. That young men ought to forſee the dangers and obligations of their calling, and firmly purpoſe to avoid thoſe dangers, and faithfully to ſatisfy their reſpective obligations 247
*Advice* 8. That they muſt accuſtom themſelves betimes not to be aſhamed of virtue 248
*Advice* 9. That they muſt be careful to embrace a ſolid and real virtue, and not an apparent and deceitful piety *ibid.*
*Advice* 10. That young perſons ought to confirm themſelves more and more in ſolid ſentiments of of faith and religion 251
*Advice* 11. That they muſt be ſtrongly ſettled in Chriſtian maxims, oppoſite to thoſe of the world 252
*Chap.* x. Chriſtian maxims 253
*Maxim* 1. That we are not created for this preſent life, but for heaven *ibid.*
*Maxim* 2. That the moſt important affair which we have in this life is our ſalvation *ibid.*
*Maxim* 3. That ſalvation is not obtained without ſome pains 254
*Maxim* 4. That our chief care in this life muſt be to pleaſe God, and live in his grace *ibid.*
*Maxim* 5. That we cannot be in the grace of God, without having a conſtant reſolution of never offending him grievouſly on any account whatſoever *ibid.*
*Maxim* 6. That ſin is the greateſt evil that can befal a man *ibid.*
*Maxim* 7. That the worſt of all misfortunes is to die in mortal ſin 255
*Maxim* 8. That this misfortune happens to many, and to thoſe who think the leaſt of it *ibid.*
*Maxim* 9. That we muſt meditate often on death, judgment and eternity *ibid.*
*Maxim* 10. That we muſt ſerve God for himſelf, and through love 256
*Maxim* 11. That we muſt have a rule for our conduct, and that this rule ought to be the law of God, the example and doctrine of *Jeſus Chriſt*, and not the world, nor the example of others, nor cuſtom *ibid.*
*Maxim* 12. That the world is deceived in all its judgments and maxims 257
*Maxim* 13. That to be united to God, we muſt contemn earthly things *ibid.*
*Chap.* ix. Of perſeverance 258

THE

# THE INSTRUCTION of YOUTH IN CHRISTIAN PIETY.

## PART I.

*The reaſons and motives which oblige men to apply themſelves to virtue in their youth.*

### CHAP. I.

*The end for which man is created.*

OF all things neceſſary for man to know, the end for which he came into this world deſerves his firſt attention. Becauſe, being a rational creature, he ought to act for a final end, in the enjoyment whereof he may find his eternal happineſs. *The end for which man is created ought to be firſt known.* Now he cannot act for this end without a knowledge of it, which exciting a deſire, makes him ſearch for, and employ the means of obtaining it. A man who knows not his laſt end is like a beaſt, becauſe he regards only things preſent, things material and ſenſible, after the manner of brutes: and in this he is much more miſerable than they, ſince they find in theſe exterior objects the felicity they are capable of; but he, inſtead of finding repoſe, meets with nothing but diſguſt, and the ſource of endleſs misfortunes.

From the ignorance of their laſt end originate all the diſorders diſcernible in the lives of men; becauſe forgetting that noble and divine end for which their creator deſigned them, they are wholly taken up with the pleaſures of this mortal life; living upon earth, as if made for the earth.

It would move compaſſion, to ſee a child born of royal blood, and deſtined by his birth one day to wear a crown, yet bred up amongſt peaſants, and ignorant of his extraction, apply himſelf wholly to till the earth, bounding all his pretenſions within the ſcanty limits of earning a miſerable livelihood with the ſweat of his brow, without having the leaſt thought of the high fortune to which he was born: but it is much more to be deplored, to ſee men who are the children of heaven, deſigned by the Almighty to reign there eternally, live in an entire forgetfulneſs of that end for which they are created, and, ſetting all their affections upon earthly things, wretchedly deprive themſelves of that immenſe happineſs which the bounty of their creator prepared for them in heaven.

For this reaſon, dear *Theotime*, reſolving to exhort you to embrace virtue in your youth, I propoſe to you firſt, what you are, and for what end you were created; that knowing this, your end, you may ardently aſpire to it, and by early endeavours render yourſelf worthy of it.

*Reflection upon three things.* Recollect yourſelf then, and reflect upon three things: what you are, who made you, and for what end.

*What man is.* I. You are a man, that is, a creature endowed with underſtanding and reaſon, compoſed of a body, the ſtructure whereof is admirable, and of a reaſonable ſoul, made to the image of God. You are the moſt perfect of all viſible creatures.

*Who made man.* II. You were not made by yourſelf, for that is impoſſible; you received from another the being you now enjoy. And from whom have you received it, but from him who created heaven and earth, and who is the author of all things? It is he who formed your body in your mother's womb, and brought your ſoul out of nothing by his power. You are the work of a God; and beſides the father you have upon earth, you have another in heaven, to whom you owe all that you poſſeſs.

*Why God made man.* III. But why did God make you? Be attentive, *Theotime;* for what end, think you, did God place you in this world? Was it to enjoy the ſenſual pleaſures and ſatisfactions of this life? To heap up riches? To acquire glory and reputation amongſt men? Nothing leſs. You have a ſoul too noble to be deſtined for ſuch wretched and periſhable things: pleaſures are changed into pain, riches periſh,

periſh, and glory vaniſhes. Is it to continue a long time upon earth, to find there your happineſs, and to look for nothing after this life? If ſo, there is no difference betwixt you and irrational beings. Does not this ſo noble a ſoul which God beſtowed on you, endowed with underſtanding, will, and memory, capable of knowing all things, clearly manifeſt that you were created for a higher and more honorable end? Does not this figure of the body you bear, the ſtature erect, the head on high, and eyes raiſed towards heaven, teach you that you are not made for the earth?

Beaſts are made for the earth, there they find their happineſs, and for that reaſon they look down upon the earth: but you, dear *Theotime*, you are created for heaven; that is the place of your abode, as it is that of your origin; your ſoul came from heaven, and it ought to return thither.

But what will you find in heaven, that can render you happy? Will it be the ſight of the firmament with all thoſe beauteous ſtars? Of the ſun, *that admirable inſtrument, that work of the Moſt High**. And of all that is wonderful and great in heaven? No. All theſe things are not able to effect your felicity; God has eſteemed them too mean for you; he made them for your ſervice, not to be the object and cauſe of your happineſs. In a word, conſider all that is in the univerſe, thoſe vaſt and wonderful things which God has created; all which are not able to complete your happineſs, God has not made you for any of theſe things.

For what then? For nothing leſs than the poſſeſſion and enjoyment of himſelf in heaven. He has not judged the faireſt of his creatures worthy of you; he has given himſelf to be the object of your happineſs. For this reaſon he gave you a ſoul, formed to his image, capable of poſſeſſing him, and which, by reaſon of this capacity, is never content nor ſatisfied with the poſſeſſions and delights of this life, as every one finds by experience.

You were not then made for creatures, dear *Theotime*, but for the creator. Your laſt end is not the enjoyment of creatures, but of God himſelf. You were created to be happy by the poſſeſſion of a God in heaven, and to reign with him in a felicity incomprehenſible to human underſtanding: *The eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him*†. And this for how long? For all eternity, that is, for a time which ſhall never end, but continue



* Eccluſ. xliii. 2. † 1 Cor. ii. 9.

as long as God himſelf. This is that moſt noble end for which you are deſigned; this is the inheritance which your celeſtial father has prepared for you; this is that end for which he has created you. All this viſible world was but deſtined for your preſent uſe, to help you in promoting the glory of God.

This being ſo, recollect your thoughts, and fix them upon theſe two points.

*Two important reflections upon the laſt end.*

1. What have you done hitherto in order to that bleſſed end for which God has deſigned you? Have you aſpired thither with all your heart? Have you endeavoured to make yourſelf worthy of it? Alas! perhaps you have not yet ſeriouſly thought of it; perhaps you are far removed from it by a life full of ſin, imitating the generality of men, who turn their backs upon that happy country to which their heavenly father calls them. O blindneſs of men, how great art thou! dear *Theotime*, how do I deplore your misfortune, if you be of that number!

2. Wherefore conſider in the ſecond place what you have to do from henceforth, in order to obtain that happy end for which you are created. How long will you think ſo little of your dear country? How long will you forget heaven, O child of heaven, whoſe origin is heavenly, and who are deſigned for heaven alone! "O man" (ſays S. *Peter Chryſologus**) "what have you to do with the earth, "who pretend to be of heavenly extraction, when you ſay, our fa- "ther who art in heaven? Manifeſt therefore a celeſtial life in an "earthly habitation; if you live otherwiſe, you ſtain your noble ſtock, "and diſgrace your heavenly origin." Conclude then, dear *Theotime*, and make here a holy reſolution to aſpire to that happy end for which you were created, and to labour carefully to make yourſelf worthy, by a life not unbecoming a child of God, deſigned to poſſeſs heaven and God himſelf. This is to be done, 1ſt, by flying ſin, the only obſtacle which can withhold you from it, and ruin you for ever; and 2dly, by embracing virtue, the only path which leads to it.

## CHAP. II.

*Of our vocation to the grace of baptiſm, and of its obligations.*

*The ſecond thing neceſſary to be known.*

*The means of attaining to our laſt end.*

BEING now informed of the end of your creation, you muſt learn in the next place the means God has appointed for attaining to this end, the firſt of which is the grace

* Serm. 71. of

of making you a Christian, and rescuing you by baptism from the universal destruction occasioned by sin.

Endeavour to comprehend the greatness of this inestimable benefit. 'Tis of great importance to know it in your youth. If you wish to avoid the ordinary misfortune of Christians, the greatest part of whom are absolutely ignorant what it is to be a Christian, and what that name and state oblige them to. Hence they become so undeserving; leading a life altogether contrary to the sanctity of their state, and are unfortunately lost in that vocation wherein alone they can be saved.

Therefore, I beseech you to read attentively this chapter divided into two articles.

## ARTICLE I.

*Of the excellence of the state of a Christian, and of the favour God bestows on him whom he calls to this state.*

YOU are a Christian, *Theotime*, by the grace of God: but do you understand what this is, and what you are by this quality? Take notice of it, and learn to know the great favour God bestowed on you in the day of your baptism. *What it is to be a Christian.*

By the baptism which you have received, you are washed from original sin by the merits of the blood of *Jesus Christ* *; Delivered from the universal curse of mankind incurred by sin, and freed from and power of the Devil †. You have been made the child of God, the disciple of *Jesus Christ* your Saviour ‡. You have acquired God for your father, *Jesus Christ* for your master §, your instructor, your example, and for the rule of your life; the holy church for your mother and guardian; the angels for your protectors; the saints for your intercessors. You have been made the temple of God, who dwells in you by grace ‖. The heir to his eternal kingdom ¶, from the right and hope whereof you were fallen for ever; and you are brought back into the secure way that leads to it, being made a member of *Jesus Christ* and his church, out of which there is no salvation, and wherein you are now illuminated with the light of the faith of *Jesus Christ*, instructed by his doctrine, nourished with his precious body and blood, assisted by his grace, and furnished with all the necessary means for your salvation.



* Apocalyse i. 5. † Eph. ii. 3, 4, 5. ‡ Gal. iii. 26, 27. § Matt. xxiii. 9, 10. ‖ 1 Cor. iii. 16. ¶ Jam. ii. 5.

O God, how noble and how honorable is the ſtate of a Chriſtian! What acknowledgments, *Theotime*, ought you to render to almighty God, who has heaped upon you ſuch immenſe favours!

To comprehend better the greatneſs thereof, conſider yet that which follows.

*Three important conſiderations.*

1. God was no ways bound to do thus much for you, but it is a pure effect of his mercy, and of the great love he has for you. *Not by the works of juſtice, which we have done*, (ſays the apoſtle S. Paul) *but according to his mercy he ſaved us, by the laver of regeneration and renovation of the Holy Ghoſt, whom he hath powered forth upon us abundantly, through Jeſus Chriſt our Saviour* *.

2. Without this favour which God has ſhewn you, you could never have been ſaved: for there is no ſalvation without faith. Where would you have been, if God had not ſhewn you this mercy?

He has not done this favour to thouſands of men who live in pagan countries, in the darkneſs of ignorance and ſin; nor to ſo many heretics, who although they be baptized as you, yet live in error ſeparated from the true faith of the catholic church, which is *the pillar and ground of the truth* †. Why were not you of that number? Why has God made you to be born in a Chriſtian country rather than others, and in the boſom of the catholic church, where you are inſtructed in the divine myſteries, and things neceſſary for your ſalvation? How have you merited this favour? What happineſs is it for you, dear *Theotime*, to have experienced ſo great bounty of our God! *We are happy, O Iſrael: becauſe the things that are pleaſing to God, are made known to us* ‡. *O how fortunate are we by the grace of God, which has called us to the knowledge of his divine myſteries and adorable will! He has not ſhewn this goodneſs to all the world* §. And why has he done it to us rather than others? O dear *Theotime*, how is it poſſible that we ſhould not fix our affections upon a God who has loved us ſo much?

Learn here from a Chriſtian king the eſteem you ought to have for your vocation. St *Lewis*, king of *France*, had ſuch a value for the favour God ſhewed him in making him a Chriſtian, that he not only preferred it before his kingdom, as in effect it is infinitely greater, but having been baptized in the caſtle of *Poiſſy*, he would bear that name, and be called *Lewis of Poiſſy*, and thus ſigned

* Tit. iii. 5, 6. † 1 Tim. iii. 15, ‡ Baruch iv. 4. § Pſ. cxlvii. 20.

signed his letters and dispatches, esteeming this title more glorious than that of king of *France*. And S. *Augustine*, speaking of the emperor *Theodosius*, says, "That he accounted himself more happy "in being a member of the church, than emperor of the world*." These great men, *Theotime*, knew how to value the grace of Christianity according to its real worth.

## ARTICLE II.

### *Of the great obligations of a Christian.*

*Three great Christian obligations.*

IF our vocation to Christianity be so high a favour, what are the obligations of it? Doubtless very great, and far more so than what the generality of Christians imagine. Be attentive, *Theotime*, and learn what your profession obliges you to.

*First obligation of Christians.*

It obliges you to believe firmly all that God has revealed to us by his son *Jesus Christ*, comprised under four heads; *viz.* The mysteries of faith, the maxims he preached, the recompense of the good, and the punishment of the wicked. You were admitted to baptism only upon this condition, when the priest put this question to you, *Dost thou believe in the Father, in the Son our saviour and redeemer, and in the Holy Ghost?* You answered by the mouth of your godfather, *Credo, I believe.* But remember that this faith ought to be firm, generous, and efficacious. *Firm*, not doubting of any thing that ought to be believed. *Generous*, not being ashamed to make profession of it before men. *Efficacious*, living according to the truths you believe, and not by your actions giving the lye to your faith; after the example of many Christians, who, as the apostle says, *Profess that they know God, but in their works they deny him* †.

*Three conditions of faith.*

*Second Christian obligation.*

The profession of Christianity obliges you to renounce the Devil, and all his works. This is also a condition upon which you were admitted to baptism. The priest asking, *Dost thou renounce Satan, and all his works, and all his pomps?* You answered, *Abrenuntio, I renounce.* O *Theotime*, have you ever reflected upon this renunciation, and do you comprehend it? It is a solemn profession which you have



* Aug. lib. 5. de Civ. Dei, c. 20. † Tit. i. 16.

made, not to serve the Devil, nor follow his pomps; that is, the false appearances of earthly goods and pleasures, by the love of which he endeavours to seduce and destroy men; and to fly from all his works, that is, sin, of which he is the first author. It is a promise you made to God in the hands of the church, in the sight of the angels, and wherein, as S. *Augustin* says, "you have made "a renunciation, not speaking to men, but to God and the Angels, "who are witnesses and depositaries of your word, and who care-"fully keep it in heaven*. You are obliged to observe this renunciation which you have made; you have abjured the Devil by your words, you must also abandon him by your life and actions, if you wish not to be looked upon as a traitor and a deserter. Alas! *Theotime*, have you done so? At least, will you do it for the future? Is it possible that you should return to that enemy, whom you have so solemnly renounced?

*Third obligation of a Christian.*

The profession of a Christian obliges you to live in innocence, flying sin more than death, and practising the virtues of a Christian. To admonish you of this obligation, the priest, after he had baptized you, clothed you with a white garment, saying, *Receive this white garment, and see, thou carry it without stain before the judgment seat of God.* To make you remember by that exterior whiteness, and by those words, to preserve carefully the beauty and interior purity which your soul had then received by the grace of baptism. O *Theotime*, meditate well upon these words, and consider what will befall you at the judgment of God, if you defile that innocence by a life of sin. This white robe, with which you have been clothed, will condemn you in that dreadful day; the priest who baptized you will rise up against you, and demand of God vengeance for abusing the grace of your baptism.

I shall recount to you on this occasion the memorable behaviour of a deacon of *Carthage*, called *Murita*, to the judge *Elpidophorus* an *Arian*, who having been received by him to baptism, had renounced afterwards the catholic faith. This holy deacon, being cited before that wicked judge to give an account of his faith, carried with him the white garment with which he had clothed him at his baptism, and exposing it, spoke to him these words, with which he drew tears from all that were present: "Behold, "O *Elpidophorus*, minister of error, the white garment, which will "accuse you before the divine majesty at the day of judgment. "I have

* l. 4. de Symbolo ad Catech. c. 4.

" I have carefully preſerved it as a proof of your apoſtacy, which " will precipitate you into the abyſs of hell: It ſerved you as an " ornament when you came from baptiſm, waſhed and cleanſed " from your ſins; but now it ſhall ſerve to make you ſuffer more " ſenſibly eternal flames *."

## CHAP. III.

*That God requires, and particularly accepts the ſervice of young people.*

*Third conſideration obliging men to ſerve God in their youth.*

AFTER the two preceding conſiderations, I paſs over to others yet more particular, to convince you of the ſtrict obligation you are under of conſecrating yourſelf to God in your youth. The firſt is, that God earneſtly deſires to be ſerved by you in that age.

*Firſt reaſon.*

Becauſe the time of youth is the beginning of life. Now it is certain, that in all things God claims particularly the firſt, and the beginnings. For this reaſon in the old law, he commanded the firſt-fruits of all things to be offered to him. Of fruits, he required the firſt gathered to be preſented; of beaſts, the firſt brought forth to be ſacrificed; and of men, the eldeſt ſons to be dedicated to his ſervice in the temple, though he permitted them afterwards to be redeemed; ſhewing by this inſtitution, that notwithſtanding all things being equally his, yet he had a ſpecial eſteem for the firſt, as thoſe which above all others were due to him, and which he required as an acknowledgment. Hence the time of youth being the beginning and firſt part of our life, God demands it particularly, and will have it offered to him, in order to be faithfully employed in his ſervice.

*Second reaſon.*

Secondly, the time of youth is moſt pleaſing to God, becauſe generally ſpeaking, according to the natural order of things, it is the moſt innocent part of life, and leaſt corrupted by ſin: for then the knowledge of evil is not ſo extenſive, neither is there ſo much ability or opportunity to commit it: the judgment is not perverted by the falſe maxims of the world, nor the inclinations corrupted by the infection of the wicked, as in a more advanced age. Moreover our baptiſmal grace, which we had then only lately received, renders that age more agreeable to God, at leaſt in thoſe, who do not forfeit it by a ſinful life. But

* Victor Uticenſis l. 3. perſecut. Vandalorum.

But take notice, *Theotime*, I ſaid, that age is leſs corrupted, generally ſpeaking, and according to the natural order of things; yet it is but too true, that oftentimes much wickedneſs is found therein; though contrary to the order of nature, which has endowed that age with a ſimplicity of mind, and innocence of manners; hence they are ſo much the more guilty, who by their malice and depravity corrupt the good diſpoſitions which nature has beſtowed upon it, learning wickedneſs, and running after it, in an age when nature herſelf teaches nothing but ſimplicity and innocence.

*Third reaſon.* Thirdly, becauſe youth is the time affording the moſt opportunities of ſhewing that you love God ſincerely; for it is the time of the firſt temptations, wherein you begin to be ſolicited to renounce his love and ſervice. You are hurried on by your own paſſions, which are then the ſtrongeſt; invited by thoſe of your age, who often ſolicit you to wickedneſs, either by their example, or by their diſcourſe; and prompted by the enemy of your ſalvation, who uſes all his endeavours to withdraw you from the ſervice of God, and make ſure of you betimes. So that this age may properly be called the time of combat and trial; wherein you ſhew you love God with a conſtant and real affection, if you courageouſly reſiſt thoſe firſt aſſaults. S. *Cyprian* ſays, "There is little merit in being brave in time of peace, in ſhewing "courage when one is not attacked, and in not committing wick- "edneſs when one is not tempted; but to reſiſt evil, and fly from "ſin in the time of temptation, and in an age when ſtrongly ſo- "licited to abandon the cauſe of God, is a real proof of true virtue, "and an aſſured mark that one loves God above all things*."

Theſe reaſons, *Theotime*, convince us, that God has a ſpecial affection for the homage of youth, which being employed in flying from ſin, and ſerving God, is a ſacrifice the moſt agreeable that can be offered to him. And as a learned author ſays excellently well: "Thoſe, who in the time of youth overcome themſelves, by cou- "rageouſly reſiſting all temptations to ſin, and who conſecrate "themſelves entirely to the ſervice of God, make one continued "ſacrifice of their youth to God: which offering cannot but be "moſt agreeable to him, as long as it remains undefiled by ſin†." O *Theotime*, retain well this truth in your mind, and never forget it.

CHAP.

* Lib. de mortalitate. † Hugo a Sanct. Vict.

## CHAP. IV.

*That God particularly loves young people, and delights to beſtow many favours upon them.*

I Say moreover, *Theotime*, that God not only earneſtly deſires to be ſerved by you in your youth, but loves you in that age with a particular kindneſs, and delights to beſtow upon you more favours at that time than at any other, in order to attach you to his ſervice. This truth is no leſs certain than the former. *Fourth conſideration for ſerving God in youth.*

God is pleaſed particularly to aſſiſt by his grace three ſorts of perſons; the *weak*, the *ſimple*, (that is, thoſe who have leaſt knowledge of evil) and the *humble*. The *Weak*, becauſe there the force of his grace doth moſt appear*. The *Simple*, becauſe having leſs knowledge of evil, they commonly reſiſt leſs the grace of God, who, as the ſacred ſcripture ſays: *Will not caſt away the ſimple, nor reach out his hand to the evil doer*†. The *Humble*, becauſe as the chief obſtacle to the grace of God is *Pride*, ſo the beſt diſpoſition to obtain it, is *Humility*, according to that ſaying of ſcripture, *God reſiſteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble*‡.

Now theſe three diſpoſitions generally occur in youth; there is found in youth the moſt weakneſs, not only of body but mind, the judgment not being as yet well formed by knowledge and experience, nor the will ſufficiently confirmed againſt impreſſions contrary to its good. There is in youth more ſimplicity, as having leſs knowledge of evil, and leſs diſcernment than in a more advanced age. There is alſo in youth more humility, which is as it were natural to that age, formed for ſubjection and obedience; and if pride be found, as it happens but too often, in young minds, it is owing to an exceſſive depravity, which ſubverts the order of things, and overturns nature itſelf. Hence it evidently follows, that God, who delights in ſhewing his bounty to thoſe who have moſt need of it, and do not render themſelves undeſerving, is pleaſed to communicate many favours to young people, as well by often inſpiring them with good thoughts and deſires, as by every other aſſiſtance of his grace; provided they throw no obſtacle in the way by their wicked life, nor render themſelves unworthy of his favour, by corrupting the innocence of their

* 2 Cor. xii. 9. † Job viii. 20. ‡ Ja. iv. 6.

their age through the malice of their mind, or by the multitude of their ſins.

Experience confirms this truth. How many are there, who coming to man's eſtate, find in themſelves a great change, being no longer viſited with the many graces they had received in their youth? Then holy inſpirations were frequent, good deſires and pious reſolutions were familiar to them; they were averſe to evil, goodneſs was agreeable to them, virtue was ſweet, and its precepts eaſy. But now they find that all theſe things are changed; inſpirations more rare, ſin ſtrikes them with leſs horror; devotion becomes cold, and ſometimes totally extinct, by a ſad alteration, which makes them juſtly bewail the time paſt, and ſo many graces which they have loſt in thoſe words of *Job: Who will grant me, that I might be according to the months paſt, according to the days in which God kept me, by the aſſiſtance of his grace**.

S. *Auguſtin* dreadfully experienced this change in his own perſon, as he himſelf acknowledges in his confeſſions; for he ſays: "That "falling ſick when he was yet a youth, he demanded baptiſm "with great earneſtneſs and devotion, which was deferred for "ſome particular reaſons†." "Yet in another great ſickneſs "when about thirty years of age, he never thought of aſking for "it‡." O *Theotime*, I beſeech God that this change and regret never befall you, which is the caſe of too many, and ſhews clearly the love God bears to young perſons, which he only withdraws from them, when they, by abuſing his favours, make themſelves unworthy of them.

But if you will yet have a convincing and demonſtrative proof of the particular love God bears young people, conſider what the ſon of God did upon this occaſion, whilſt he was in the world. Beſides that he would become himſelf a child, and paſs through all the degrees of age, of infancy, of childhood, of youth, he being able to diſpenſe with himſelf, and become a perfect man at his firſt entrance into the world, how often did he, during his life, teſtify his love and tenderneſs for that age? The goſpel relates in many places§, how he frequently called to himſelf little children, and commanded that they ſhould be permitted to approach to him; he reproved ſuch as hindered them from approaching him, ſaying, it was to them that the kingdom of heaven did appertain: *Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come to me; for*

* Job xix. † Lib. 1. Confeſſ. c. 19. ‡ Ibid. lib. 5. cap. 9. § Math. xix. Marc x. Luke xviii.

*for the kingdom of heaven is for such* *. He embraced them with wonderful tenderneſs, and ſent them not back till he had laid his hands upon them, and given them his holy benediction †.

The moſt remarkable cures he wrought were in favour of young people; ſuch was the ſon of the ruler who was ready to expire, in *John* ‡. Another who was tormented by the Devil §. The ſervant of the Centurion, and the daughter of the *Cananean*.

Of the three dead whom he raiſed to life, two were very young, *viz.* the daughter of *Jairus*, and the ſon of the widow of *Naim*: and the third, who was *Lazarus*, was not far advanced in years. Of the twelve apoſtles, he loved particularly the youngeſt, which was S. *John*.

Laſtly, what greater proofs can we have of the love *Jeſus Chriſt* bears young people, than theſe two I am going to mention?

The firſt is, the aſſurance he has given, that all the favours which ſhall be beſtowed upon them, ſhall be accounted as done to himſelf: *He that ſhall receive one ſuch little child in my name, receiveth me* ¶.

The ſecond is, that dreadful menace which he afterwards uttered againſt thoſe who ſcandalize little ones, that is, who draw them into ſin: *He that ſhall ſcandalize one of theſe little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a mill-ſtone were hung about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the ſea* ‖. Is not this a great token of the ſingular affection *Jeſus Chriſt* bears to youth, ſince he ſpeaks with ſo much zeal and indignation againſt thoſe who aſſiſt in withdrawing them from his ſervice?

Theſe, dear *Theotime*, are convincing proofs of the love God has for you in your youth. After theſe aſſurances, can you refuſe the love and ſervice he demands of you in this age? Doubtleſs you cannot without the height of ingratitude, and without offering him a moſt enormous affront.

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## CHAP. V.

*That they who do not conſecrate themſelves to God in their youth, offer him a moſt heinous injury.*

*Fifth conſideration for ſerving God in youth.*

THIS truth evidently follows from the two former; for if it be true, as we have ſhewn, that God deſires and particularly demands the ſervice of young people, and has the greateſt

* Matth. xix. 14. † Marc. x. ‡ John iv. § Mat. xvii. ¶ Mat. xviii. 5. ‖ Mat. xviii. 6.

greateſt love for that age, beſtowing very ſingular favours to aſſiſt, and invite it to his ſervice; it follows, that to refuſe him the ſervice he deſires, and demands with ſo much juſtice, and not to anſwer the love he teſtifies to youth by ſo many favours and benefits, is to offer him a moſt heinous and enormous affront. But becauſe this truth is of ſuch conſequence, that it can never be ſufficiently inculcated, I ſhall make you ſee it more diſtinctly by the three following conſiderations, which I beſeech you to examine well.

*The injury that is done to God by not ſerving him in that age.*

1. Not to conſecrate your youth to the ſervice of God, is to refuſe him a certain and aſſured time, which you may give him to reſerve for him an uncertain time, which you are not ſure of having, and which is not in your power, *viz.* the time to come. This is the firſt degree of the injury you offer to God. You promiſe God to ſerve him when you are older. Who has told you that you ſhall live any long time? If you are not certain of being alive to-morrow, how are you ſure of living ten years? There are more who die before twenty or twenty five years of age than after. Now if you have no aſſurance of living a long time, is it not a great injury to God, to promiſe him a time not in your power, and refuſe him the time preſent, which you enjoy? Do you not think, *Theotime*, he mocks God, who acts in this manner? And does he not evidently manifeſt that he has no deſign to ſerve him, if he defers conſecrating himſelf to him till a time which perhaps may never come?

*Firſt reaſon of this injury.*

2. You not only reſerve an uncertain time for God, but take away the better to give him the worſe. For refuſing to ſerve God, and apply yourſelf to virtue in your youth, (which is, as we ſaid before, commonly leſs depraved by vice, and more favoured by heaven) you reſerve yourſelf to a time when every thing conſpires to render you unfit for the practice of virtue. The infirmities of the body which daily encreaſe, the inveterate bad habits wherein you will be engaged, the perplexity of worldly affairs, the ſolicitude of temporal things, the ſpirit and maxims of the world, which you have embraced; the world, which (as S. *John* ſays*,) is entirely plunged in vice and corruption, which is fond of nothing but

*Second reaſon.*

* 1 John v. 19.

but pleaſures, covetouſneſs, and pride, and has no more thought of ſalvation and eternity, than if they were a dream.

All theſe things will be ſo many obſtables to your ſalvation, and entirely withdraw you from the ſervice of God, if you do not prevent them in good time, by applying yourſelf in your youth to the avoiding of ſin, and the practice of virtue. Judge then of the injuſtice you are guilty of, in deferring your ſervices to a time when ſo many things conſpire againſt it, and refuſing to ſerve him in an age, when fewer obſtacles and greater advantages preſent themſelves. Doubtleſs this is a grievous injury; yet this is not all, take notice of what follows.

*Third reaſon.* 3. What completes the enormity of the injury offered to God, is, that refuſing to ſerve him in your youth, you delay it till you have wearied yourſelf in the purſuit of pleaſure, ſatiated your paſſions, and given full ſcope to the wicked inclinations of your age; ſo that the time you reſerve, is but the remnant of what you have employed in ſin, and the ſervice of the Devil.

Do you comprehend, *Theotime*, the heinouſneſs of this injury, and the indignity with which you treat your God, and your creator? Your ſoul is deſigned to be *the temple and dwelling of God**; and you will not receive him, till after you have a long time proſtituted it to the Devil, and defiled it with a vaſt number of crimes. All your life ought to be conſecrated to the ſervice of God, and will you employ the firſt and better part in the ſervice of the Devil, reſerving to God only that which is uſeleſs to ſin? Can there be an indignity equal to this? What would you ſay of a man that ſhould ſerve up to the table of a prince, nothing but the leavings of dogs and ſwine? This you would ſay was ſhameful; and have you not a horror of the ſame thing, of which you are far more guilty with reſpect to God, reſerving for his ſervice only the age wherein you can no longer gratify the paſſions you have ſo brutiſhly cloyed during your youth? Is not this a horrible affront you offer to God? If God complained ſo much of thoſe in the old law, who offered upon his altar profane and unclean bread; what complaints will he not make againſt you, who ſhall offer to him only the remnant of your life, already defiled with every vice? If he denounces a curſe upon him who retains the better part for himſelf, and preſents the worſt to him in ſacrifice: *Curſed, ſays he, is the deceitful man, that hath in his flock a male, making a vow,*

* 1 Cor. iii.

of impiety, and that great crimes are the effect of a soul abandoned by God for her past sins. This young prince neglecting to curb his inclinations, permitted his heart to be overcome with unchaste love, in such a manner, that this brutal passion, which generally promotes crimes, making him break through the most inviolable laws of nature, brought him to love unchastely his own sister; and not obtaining her consent to such an abominable proposal, he adds force to lust, committing in one action two most enormous crimes, violence and incest.

But the divine justice soon showed how much it abhorred the crimes and wicked life of this young prince: for two years after he was killed by his own brother *Absalom*, who had meditated this revenge all that time. O God, how terrible are thy judgments!

The fourth is of *Absalom*, the third son of *David*, who was no better than his brother *Amnon* *. He was proud, dissembling, revengeful, and highly ambitious, conceited of himself, and his own beauty, which, according to the scripture, was extraordinary. The first wicked action which the scripture relates of him, but which must needs have been preceded by many others, is the murder of his brother *Amnon*. By this action he lost his fathers's favour, and was banished from him for the space of five years, after which he was recalled, and admitted to his favour again. He was scarce returned to his father's court, when he contrived a grand rebellion against him: and having by his addresses gained the affection of the people, he retired to a small town, and was proclaimed king. After this he takes up arms against his father, forces him to fly from *Jerusalem*, and pursues him with a strong army, which he had raised to deprive him of his crown. What will the divine justice do here? Will it connive at such a degenerate child? Hear *Theotime*, what the sacred scripture relates. *David* seeing himself brought to such streights by his son, was obliged to make head and oppose him. He sets in order the few forces he had with him, sends them to fight, gives him battle. *Absalom*'s men, though far more numerous, are defeated.

In this discomfiture (O the divine judgments!) it happened that *Absalom*, endeavouring to save himself by flight, was carried under a great oak, and as he wore his locks very long, his hair by a strange accident, and particular permission of God, was so strongly entangled in the branches of the tree, that the mule he rode on could not carry him away, but continuing its course, left him hanging

* 2 Kings xiii and xiv.

hanging by his hair, without being able to disengage himself. *David*'s soldiers seeing him in this condition, ran him through with a lance, and killed him on the spot; although *David*, by an astonishing tenderness, when sending them to the battle, had expressly forbidden any violence to be offered to his person.

O divine justice! thou plainly shewest that thou dost not connive at the iniquities of wicked children; and although thou deferrest for a time the chastisement they deserve, to give them leisure to repent, thou afterwards punishes most severely their obstinacy in sin, and the affront they offer to thy goodness, with which thou expectest their repentance.

Behold, four examples from the sacred scripture, which shew the greatness of God's aversion to vicious young people; the scripture might furnish many others. Ancient histories are full, and daily experience produces but too many examples in these our days.

*An important remark.*

Take notice of one thing worthy of consideration; that in the four precedent examples are instanced three sorts of sins, which render young people particularly odious to God, and which generally occasion their ruin. In the first and third, the sin of impurity. In the second, the contempt of religion and holy things. In the fourth, the contempt of parents, and rebellion against paternal authority.

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## CHAP. VII.

*That salvation generally depends on the time of youth.*

*Seventh and most important motive which obliges young people to virtue.*

WHAT we have said in the four last chapters, laid before you the obligation incumbent on you of serving God in your youth, out of respect to the desire he has thereof, and the love he bears you, which you cannot slight, without being guilty of a most heinous injury, and incurring his aversion and disgrace. Now I will convince you of this obligation from a principle of self-interest, and shew you clearly, that your salvation almost entirely depends on the life you lead during your youth.

I wish, *Theotime*, that you, and all those of your age, would thoroughly understand and never forget this truth, unknown to the greatest part of men, but the ignorance of which is the ruin

and damnation of many. I wiſh all men rightly underſtood, that the immenſe eternity of happineſs or miſery, which waits them after this life, depends upon this firſt part of our time, which all the world ſlight, and which the moſt part employ in wickedneſs.

To convince you of this truth, I ſhall produce no leſs than the ſentiment of the ſacred ſcripture, that is, of the Holy Ghoſt, whoſe words are ſo expreſs, that it is impoſſible to doubt of it.

For why doth it in ſo many places exhort young people to think of their ſalvation betimes, and to apply themſelves to virtue in their youth, except it were to ſhow of how great importance that time is for their ſalvation?

Why does it ſay in *Eccleſiaſtes; Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth, before the time of affliction come** ? From whence comes it, that it aſſures us in the book of *Proverbs*: *A young man according to his way, even when he is old, he will not depart from it* †; that is, the manner of life which he has begun? Wherefore does it ſay by the prophet *Jeremy*, That *it is good for a man when he both borne the yoke from his youth* ‡; that is, has applied himſelf to virtue, and to bear the pleaſing yoke of God's commandments?

Why in *Eccleſiaſticus* are youth ſo earneſtly exhorted to virtue, by thoſe excellent words, able to ſoften the moſt inſenſible hearts? *My ſon, from thy youth up receive inſtruction, and even to thy gray hairs thou ſhalt find wiſdom. Come to her as one that ploweth, and ſoweth*, that is, with care and labour, *and wait for her good fruits. For in working about her thou ſhalt labour a little, and ſhalt quickly eat of her fruits. How very unpleaſant is wiſdom to the unlearned, and the unwiſe will not continue with her. But with them to whom ſhe is known, ſhe continueth even to the ſight of God* §. All the reſt of the chapter is but a continual exhortation to young people to be virtuous.

Wherefore in the twenty fifth chapter does it ſay, *The things that thou haſt not gathered in thy youth, how ſhalt thou find them in thy old age* ‖?

Laſtly, among the books of ſacred ſcripture, why was there one expreſsly made for the inſtruction of youth, which is that of *Proverbs*? Does not all this manifeſtly diſcover, that the Holy Ghoſt would give men to underſtand that the time of youth is of greater conſequence than the greateſt part imagine; and that all happineſs or miſery of man, whether in this life or in the next, depends gene-

* Eccleſ. xii. 1. † Prov. xxii. 6. ‡ Lament. iii. 27. § Eccli. vi. 18, 19, 20, 21, 23. ‖ Eccli. xxv. 5.

generally on that time well or ill employed; this obſervation being generally true, that thoſe ſecure their ſalvation, who in their youth are bred up in the fear of God, and obſervance of his commandments; and that thoſe who have not been educated in this fear of God, or caſt it from them to follow ſin with greater liberty, are unhappily loſt.

All this truth is grounded on theſe two principles. The firſt is, that thoſe who have followed virtue in their youth, eaſily perſevere the remainder of their life: the ſecond, that on the contrary, thoſe who have given themſelves over to ſin at that time, with great difficulty amend, and frequently never. We ſhall diſplay theſe two truths ſtill more at large.

## CHAP. VIII.

### *That thoſe who have followed virtue in their youth, generally perſevere in it the reſt of their life.*

*Eighth motive.*

EXperience renders this propoſition ſo evident, that it is taken for granted in the ſentiments of the ſacred ſcripture and all wiſe men. To make you more ſenſible of it, I ſhall lay before you the reaſons thereof, built upon both thoſe authorities.

The firſt is, that habits acquired in youth, remain a long time, and are not eaſily ſhaken off.

*A young man according to his way, even when he is old, he will not depart from it* *; that is, very rarely. "The firſt impreſſions made "upon tender minds (ſays S. *Jerom* †) are with difficulty effaced; "wool which hath taken its firſt tincture, doth not eaſily return "to its former whiteneſs; and an earthen veſſel keeps long the "ſmell and taſte of that liquor wherewith it was firſt ſeaſoned." Wherefore the ſcripture ſays, *That it is good*, that is to ſay, very important, *for a man, when he hath borne the yoke from his youth* ‡, becauſe having acquired it at that time, it is eaſily preſerved the remainder of our life.

S. *Bernard* ſays §, "That we need not ſeek any other cauſe why "many old men are found to be deſtitute of every virtue, but be-"cauſe they acquired them not in their youth, the fitteſt time for "that purpoſe." And S. *Jerom* ¶, deſcribing the excellent qualities of old age in thoſe who applied themſelves to learning and



* Prov. xxii. 6. † Ep. ad Læt. ‡ Lam. iii. 27. § Lib. de ord. vitæ. ¶ Epiſt. ad Nepot.

virtue in their youth, ſays, "That becoming more knowing with "age, more ſteady by experience, wiſer in proceſs of time, they "gather the agreeable fruits of the ancient labours of their youth."

The ſecond reaſon is, becauſe, as we ſaid above, youth is the time of trial and temptations, which being overcome, we eaſily ſurmount all that follow.

The temptations to impurity are certainly the moſt violent, the trials frequent, but victories very rare, ſays S. *Auſtin**. They have ſhaken the conſtancy of thoſe whom torments could not overcome, as S. *Jerom* † obſerves. Now although theſe temptations be common to all ages, yet they are ſtronger and more frequent in youth, which, as S. *Jerom*‡ ſays, is a continual combat againſt chaſtity; youth being environed with the occaſions of ſin, and ſtimulated by the provocations of the fleſh, ſuffers very much in preſerving its purity, like fire almoſt extinguiſhed with green wood heaped upon it.

But when by the aſſiſtance of divine grace, which, as we have ſhewn above, is greater and more abundant in youth, the victory is gained in theſe firſt encounters; the other trials which are to be undergone in the courſe of life, which according to ſacred ſcripture is a perpetual combat§, are ſurmounted with far leſs difficulty.

The reaſon is, becauſe temptations diminiſh in proportion as they are overcome; divine grace increaſes, by how much better uſe is made of it; and a heart accuſtomed to conquer, yields not eaſily, ſince it daily acquires new ſtrength by its victories. *Sampſon* having exerted himſelf in fighting with a lion, became invincible. And *David* having in his youth ſurmounted lions and bears, he afterwards, though very young, overthrew the giant *Goliah*, the terror of *Iſrael*, and was never overcome in all the battles in which he engaged.

Dear *Theotime*, if you knew the repoſe and tranquility they enjoy, who have behaved themſelves gallantly in the combats of their youth, the deſire of partaking of that peace would powerfully encourage you to reſiſt with all your vigour! Learn it from the Holy Ghoſt by the mouth of the wiſe man: *My ſon*, ſays he, *ſearch for wiſdom, and ſhe ſhall be made known to thee, and when thou haſt gotten her, let her not go: for in the latter end, thou ſhall find reſt in her, and ſhe ſhall be turned to thy joy. Then ſhall her fetters be a ſtrong defence for thee, and a firm foundation*¶. I

* Serm. 250. de temp. † In. vit. Paul. ‡ Epiſt. ad Nepot. § Job vii. ¶ Eccli. vi. 28, 29, 30.

I add the third reaſon, which is, that God augments his graces, and multiplies his bleſſings upon thoſe who have lived piouſly in their youth, in order to preſerve them in that good path, they have already entered by his grace.

I cannot prove this truth better, than by producing the aſſurance which God himſelf gives you in the ſacred ſcripture: *The Lord*, ſays the wiſe man, *giveth wiſdom; and out of his mouth cometh prudence and knowledge.* And he not only gives it, but takes care to continue it; for it is he, who *will keep the ſalvation of the righteous, and protect them that walk in ſimplicity.* He adds afterwards, *If wiſdom ſhall enter into thy heart, and knowledge pleaſe thy ſoul:* (he ſpeaks of the knowledge of virtue) *counſel ſhall keep thee, and prudence ſhall preſerve thee. That thou mayſt be delivered from the evil way, and from the man that ſpeaketh perverſe things, &c. from the ſtrange woman and from the ſtranger, who ſofteneth her words, &c. That thou mayſt walk in a good way: and mayſt keep the paths of the juſt**.

There are a great number of like paſſages in ſacred ſcripture, which aſſure us of that ſingular protection and aſſiſtance of God towards thoſe who follow virtue in their youth, and it is eaſy to confirm them by examples from the ſame ſcripture.

## CHAP. IX.

*This truth confirmed by remarkable examples, taken out of ſacred ſcripture, of thoſe who having been virtuous in their youth, continued ſo all their life.*

THE firſt example I ſhall produce is that of *Joſeph*, a model of virtue in his youth†. At ſixteen years of age he abhorred vice in ſuch a manner, that the wicked example of his brethren could never corrupt his innocence; on the contrary, not being able to endure their wickedneſs, he gave notice thereof to his father *Jacob*. The greatneſs of his virtue, for which he was ſingularly favoured by God, and tenderly loved by his father, drew upon him the enmity of his brethren, who meeting him one day in the fields, conſpired to murder him; but having a horror of dipping their hands in his blood, they reſolved to let him down into an old pit, with a deſign of leaving him there to periſh. This poor child, not able to ſoften their cruelty, by prayers and tears, was obliged to yield, putting all

*First example, of* Joſeph.



* Prov. ii. † Gen. xxxvii.

all his confidence in God, who never abandons thoſe who love him. In this he was not deceived; for his inhuman brethren, ſtruck with the horror of ſo barbarous a crime, changed their firſt reſolution. They drew him out of the pit, and ſold him to merchants, then paſſing by, who carried him into *Egypt*, where he was ſold to a lord of that country. *Joſeph* being with his maſter perſevered in virtue and innocence of life, which drew down the bleſſing of God upon the houſe of his maſter, who ſoon diſcovered his merit, and conceived a great affection for him.

Behold how *Joſeph* ſpent the firſt part of his youth, that is, until about the age of twenty. See the conſequence of it, and how he paſſed the reſt of his life; wherein I obſerve three remarkable occaſions, in which his virtue underwent the ſevereſt trial.

The firſt was about that age when he ſuſtained the moſt violent attack that chaſtity could undergo, being ſolicited by his maſter's wife to conſent to a deteſtable adultery; but the fear of God, wherein he had been bred up, gave him ſuch a horror of the crime, that all the importunity and violence of that lewd woman could never ſtagger his chaſtity, which ſince has been an example to all ages.

From this temptation he fell into a greater: for this wicked woman not being able to compaſs her impious deſign, accuſed him of attempting her chaſtity, impoſing falſly upon him the crime ſhe herſelf had committed. His maſter provoked at this, ordered him to be bound and caſt into priſon, where he continued to the age of thirty. This was a ſevere temptation, and a ſhock which might eaſily have overturned a virtue but lately acquired; to be accuſed and deemed guilty of a crime he abominated, and to ſuffer as if he had committed it! But *Joſeph* continued immoveable in his firſt virtue; and as he had learned patience in his youth by the perſecution of his brethren, he bore this with wonderful conſtancy, comforting himſelf in the conviction of his innocence, of which God was both witneſs and protector. God, who had always been with him, left him not on this occaſion; but, as the ſacred ſcripture ſays *, deſcended with him into the pit that he might aſſiſt him with his grace, and wonderfully deliver him, as he did preſently after.

To theſe two trials ſucceeded the third, yet greater. This was the elevated ſtation to which he was raiſed: for having interpreted *Pharaoh*'s dream by the knowledge God gave him of things to come, this king not only delivered him out of priſon, but made him

* Wiſd. xv.

him the first man in his kingdom, over which he gave him a general charge, with absolute power to dispose of all things according to his will, commanding his subjects to obey him as himself *. In this high station, which generally dazzles men's eyes, and soon destroys an ordinary share of virtue, *Joseph* remained firm in his primitive innocence, always like himself. Forgetfulness of God, pride, covetousness, revenge, the usual attendants on unlimited power, could never find admittance into his breast. Having an opportunity of revenging himself on his brethren, who came into *Egypt* to buy provisions during a severe famine, he not only omitted it, but received them with such tenderness and marks of affection, as draw tears from those who read the scripture account of it. He carried himself in his station with so much justice †, that no complaint was ever made of his conduct; on the contrary the *Egyptians* proclaimed him their deliverer, being freed from want during a seven years famine, by his great prudence, for which he was entitled in those countries, *The saviour of the world.* He persevered thus in virtue and the fear of God, in the midst of grandeur, from the age of thirty, when he was raised to that fortune, even to the age of an hundred and ten, wherein he died. O *Theotime*, reflect well upon this example, and learn from it, what virtue acquired in youth is able to effect.

I should content myself with this example, if that which follows were not also admirably well adapted to the same purpose. It is of *Toby*, the father of young *Toby*, whose conduct as well in his youth, as in a more advanced age the scripture declares to be worthy of our admiration.

*Second example, of* Toby.

He was a young man of the tribe and city of *Nephthali* ‡; and although he was the youngest of all his tribe, yet nothing childish or youthful appeared in his actions. And when all others went to sacrifice to the golden calf of *Jereboam* king of *Israel*; shunning their company, he went alone to *Jerusalem* to the temple of the Lord, and there adored the God of *Israel*, offering to him faithfully his first-fruits and tithes. *These and such like things did he observe*, adds the scripture, *when but a boy, according to the law of God* §.

O the admirable life, *Theotime*, of a young man, who acted nothing childish, that is, nothing contrary to virtue; who permitted not himself to be carried away by the torrent of ill example, con-

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him the first man in his kingdom, over which he gave him a general charge, with absolute power to dispose of all things according to his will, commanding his subjects to obey him as himself *. In this high station, which generally dazzles men's eyes, and soon destroys an ordinary share of virtue, *Joseph* remained firm in his primitive innocence, always like himself. Forgetfulness of God, pride, covetousness, revenge, the usual attendants on unlimited power, could never find admittance into his breast. Having an opportunity of revenging himself on his brethren, who came into *Egypt* to buy provisions during a severe famine, he not only omitted it, but received them with such tenderness and marks of affection, as draw tears from those who read the scripture account of it. He carried himself in his station with so much justice †, that no complaint was ever made of his conduct; on the contrary the *Egyptians* proclaimed him their deliverer, being freed from want during a seven years famine, by his great prudence, for which he was entitled in those countries, *The saviour of the world.* He persevered thus in virtue and the fear of God, in the midst of grandeur, from the age of thirty, when he was raised to that fortune, even to the age of an hundred and ten, wherein he died. O *Theotime*, reflect well upon this example, and learn from it, what virtue acquired in youth is able to effect.

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continuing ſtedfaſt in the ſervice of God, when the reſt to a man abandoned their creator! A youth ſpent ſo virtuouſly, could not but be followed by a holy life, as you ſhall ſee.

*Toby* being come to man's eſtate was led captive by the *Aſſyrians*, with all his countrymen, to the city of *Ninive:* being there, he departed not from the path of virtue which he had ſo happily entered in his youth.

For firſt, as he had learned in his youth to reſiſt the wicked example of others, he permitted not himſelf to be corrupted in his captivity by the example of his countrymen, who ate licentiouſly the meats of Gentiles, though prohibited by the law of God.

Secondly, having deſerved a particular regard from the *Aſſyrian* king by his virtuous conduct, he had leave to go to any part of the kingdom: he viſited his fellow captives, admoniſhing them concerning their ſalvation, and their perſeverance in the ſervice of God.

Thirdly, the affliction of the captives encreaſing, he daily viſited and comforted them, diſtributing what he was able to give them, fed the hungry, clothed the naked, and with an unparallelled charity buried all the dead he found, notwithſtanding the diſpleaſure of the king, which he had incurred by that action, even to the danger of his life. But what is yet more admirable, is, the patience with which he bore the melancholy affliction of blindneſs, which befel him by an unexpected accident in the fifty-ſixth year of his age. One day, as he returned home wearied with the burial of many dead, he chanced to fall aſleep under a wall, from the top whereof the dung out of a ſwallow's neſt fell upon his eyes, and took away his ſight. This was doubtleſs a very great affliction, and a moſt ſevere trial; but he ſupported it with ſuch an admirable patience that the ſacred ſcripture compares it to that of *Job*, and, what is very remarkable, attributes it to the piety and fear of God in which he had lived during his youth. Behold what it ſays: *Now this trial the Lord therefore permitted to happen to him, that an example might be given to poſterity of his patience, as alſo of holy Job. For whereas he had always feared God from his infancy, and kept his commandments, he repined not againſt God becauſe the evil of blindneſs had befallen him. But continued immoveable in the fear of God, giving thanks to God all the days of his life* *. O how admirable is the effect of virtue, which has always increaſed with age! He was deliver-

* Tob. ii. 12, 13, 14.

delivered from his affliction four years after, and living to the age of 110, he died in peace, after he had made, as the scripture observes, a continual progress in the fear and service of God. Thus, *Theotime*, do they live, thus do they die, who have followed virtue in their youth.

*Third example, of* Eleazar.

A third example is *Eleazar*, that great martyr of the old testament. He was an ancient man, very venerable for the number of his years, but more so for his virtue, in which he had improved from his infancy. When king *Antiochus* persecuted the *Jews*, in order to make them renounce their religion, and the worship of the true God, this holy man was apprehended to be constrained thereto by force of torments, which could never shake his former piety. And when some of the by-standers exhorted him to comply, at least in appearance, to free himself from torture; *but he began to consider the dignity of his age, and his ancient years, and the inbred honour of his gray head, and his good life and conversation from a child: and he answered without delay* *, and with an invincible courage, that he would rather die, than consent to such a criminal action: upon which his torments were redoubled, and he suffered death with incredible patience.

Learn, dear *Theotime*, from this example and the preceding, what virtue acquired in youth is able to do, when confirmed by a continual exercise of good actions; and labour to be such now, as you would wish to be all the remainder of your life.

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## CHAP. X.

*That those who have been addicted to vice in their youth amend with great difficulty, and often never.*

*Ninth motive, of great importance for living well during youth.*

O *Theotime*, that I had a pen capable of imprinting this important truth more lastingly in your heart than in brass or marble, and making you perfectly comprehend the great and dreadful difficulty of amendment after a youth spent in vice!

A difficulty so great, that it is almost impossible sufficiently to express it; and on the other side so general, that we cannot consider

* 2 Machab. vi. 23.

ſider it attentively, without being touched with a lively ſorrow, ſeeing ſuch numbers of Chriſtians, and principally of young people, who groan under the tyranny of a vicious habit, which being contracted in their youth, and encreaſed with age, leads them to perdition; from which if they chance to recover, it is with incredible pains and combats, and by manifeſt miracle of divine grace. Learn, Dear *Theotime*, to avoid this danger, and endeavour to conceive its greatneſs, either that you may entirely prevent it, or quickly withdraw yourſelf, if you be already engaged therein.

This great difficulty ſprings from three cauſes. The firſt is the incredible power and force of a wicked habit, which being once rooted in the ſoul, cannot be plucked up but with great pains. All habits have commonly this quality, that they continue a long time, and are with much difficulty removed. But amongſt others, wicked habits are ſuch as adhere more ſtrongly, and are not ſo eaſily changed; becauſe corrupt nature is more prone to evil than good. Hence the ſcripture ſays, That *the perverſe are hard to be corrected*, which makes *the number of fools*, that is, of ſinners, *infinite* *.

But among wicked habits, thoſe contracted in youth are the ſtrongeſt, and with moſt difficulty overcome: for the paſſions, which are the inſtruments of vice, unreſtrained at that time by virtue, encreaſe with age, and as they encreaſe give vice daily new ſtrength, and render it at length unconquerable.

For this reaſon the ſame ſcripture, in order to expreſs the force of a vicious habit contracted in youth, delivers a ſentence which young people ought to have frequently in their mind: *His bones ſhall be filled with the vices of his youth, and they ſhall ſleep with him in the duſt* †. That is, the vices and wicked habits of youth become ſo deeply rooted in the ſoul, that all the remainder of life is tainted with them, and death alone, as we daily ſee, can put a final period to them.

The cauſe is very evident; for vice when in poſſeſſion of a ſoul, encreaſes and ſtrengthens the paſſions, the paſſions corrupt the judgment, ſo that it miſtakes good for evil, and evil for good: the judgment being once corrupted perverts the will, which runs blindly into ſin, and from thence proceeds all the evil; becauſe, as S. *Auguſtin* ſays ‡, "The will not governed turns to an eager "deſire of ſin, and by our gratifying this deſire it is formed into

"a

* Eccleſ. i. 15. † Job xx. 11. ‡ Lib. 8. confeſ. cap. 3.

" a habit, and a habit not reſiſted becomes a neceſſity;" that is, an extreme difficulty in avoiding ſin. Hence when a perſon is arrived at this pitch, there are no hopes of his amendment; becauſe as another author (S. *Iſid.*) adds, " Neceſſity terminates in death, by " expoſing him who lies under it to final impenitence."

The ſecond cauſe of this great difficulty, is the decreaſe of divine grace: for as God multiplies his favours to thoſe who receive them with humility, and employ them for their ſalvation; ſo he diminiſhes them to thoſe who abuſe and contemn them. Now if he deals thus with mankind in general, much more with youth; on whom as he beſtows many favours, as long as they remain deſerving of them, ſo he withdraws his kindneſſes when they abuſe them, as we have made to appear by the experience of thoſe, who having been favoured with particular obligations from God in their youth, preſently become ſenſible of a great diminution of thoſe favours, occaſioned by the ill uſe they have made of the ſame.

God himſelf threatens this by a prophet, when he ſpeaks thus: *In that day the fair virgins and the young men ſhall faint for thirſt. They that ſwear by the ſin of Samaria**; that is, who make profeſſion of adoring the idols which the city of *Samaria* adores. This thirſt is not only a corporal, but a ſpiritual thirſt, and the want of divine grace, of which it is ſpoken immediately before; *I will ſend forth a famine into the land: not a famine of bread, nor a thirſt of water, but of hearing the word of the Lord*†.

The third cauſe of the great difficulty of correcting the ill habits contracted in youth, is the power of the Devil, who gains ground in proportion as our ſins increaſe, and the grace of God is diminiſhed. This is the proper effect of ſin, viz. after depriving a ſoul of the grace and protection of her creator, to ſubject her to the dominion of the Devil, and engage her more and more in that unhappy ſlavery, in proportion as ſhe continues in vice. O *Theotime*, who can ſufficiently expreſs the deplorable ſtate of a ſoul reduced to that ſervitude, under the tyranny of her mortal enemy, who employs all his engines and devices to deſtroy her without recovery; by ſuggeſting all temptations that are likely to draw her into ſin; by furniſhing her daily with new occaſions of deſtruction, by diverting her from thoſe that might withdraw her from her unhappy ſtate; by hurrying her from ſin to ſin, from one vice to another,

* Amos viii. 13, 14. † Amos viii. 11.

another, till the measure of her iniquities being filled up, she is at last abandoned to the Devil, by a visible effect of the divine wrath!

Thus does this cruel enemy treat those whom he has under his power, by a just permission of God, who thus rejects those who withdraw themselves from his service and friendship, and who refusing to submit themselves to the sweetness of his law, and the abundance of his favours and blessings, most justly deserve to be abandoned to that cruel master, who breathes nothing but their destruction, and will never cease to persecute them till he has plunged them into eternal damnation*. How unhappy are all those who are fallen into this deplorable slavery! yet they are still more miserable, who, whilst they are engaged therein, think not of seeking their deliverance.

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## CHAP. XI.

*Examples of those who have corrected the vices of their youth, yet with very great difficulty.*

IF this truth be manifest from reason, as we have seen, yet it is more so from experience, which furnishes us with examples of persons, who after being plunged into vice during their youth, by a special mercy have been reclaimed. I shall content myself with producing one of the most striking, which is that of S. *Augustin*. We have in the person of this saint, the most remarkable instance that antiquity affords, to shew clearly how difficult a thing it is to correct vices contracted in youth. I shall only relate what he himself says of it in his *confessions*, by a particular inspiration of God, to teach all young people an abhorrence of vice, and to warn them of the dangers and rocks whereon he unfortunately ran, where he infallibly would have perished, if God had not withdrawn him by a miracle of his divine mercy, which he has not shewn to many others.

*The example of S. Augustin.*

He says†, First, that he spent his childhood in all the wicked inclinations that age is capable of‡, viz. untractableness, disobedience, lying, laziness, inclination for play and pleasure, a disrelish for all that was good, susceptible of every thing contrary to modesty

* Jer. lvi. † Lib. 1. confes. cap. 10. ‡ Cap. 12 and 13.

modeſty and decency; flying labour, but fond of diverſions, learning nothing but what he ought not to have known. Such was his childhood.

Theſe firſt inclinations, as it uſually happens, were followed by far greater diſorders. Being come to ſixteen years of age*, that mind which had not been reſtrained in the firſt diſordinate exceſſes of its nature, hurried him into all the vices of which his age was capable†. He‡ owns but with ſighs and lamentations, that ſenſuality and laſcivious paſſions did ſo powerfully ſeize on his heart in that age, that they plunged him into ſuch ſins of impurity, as are not fit to be expreſſed; ſo that neither the fear of God, nor the diſcreet admonitions of his mother, nor the infamy of ſin, nor any other conſideration, could lay the leaſt reſtraint upon him in thoſe early ſallies; on the contrary he became ſo abandoned, that he not only loſt all ſhame for vice§, but took a pride in it, and was aſhamed not to be accounted as vitious as the moſt depraved; believing it a great misfortune to be thought innocent, when he heard others glory in their wickedneſs.

He began this life in his father's houſe, upon his return from his ſtudies, where he dwelt a whole year; after that, he was ſent to *Carthage* to finiſh his ſtudies, where he continued the ſame manner of life till the age of nineteen.

Here, *Theotime*, take notice of four or five cauſes of this corruption of S. *Auguſtin* in that age. *A conſiderable remark for young men.*

The firſt was idleneſs, wherein he ſpent his ſixteenth year in his father's houſe, at his return from his ſtudies, which is a time very dangerous to young people¶.

The ſecond was the little care his father took of his behaviour, not heeding whether his ſon were virtuous, provided he became learned and eloquent, which is too common a fault among parents.

Thirdly, the contempt of his mother's admonitions, who knowing her ſon's diſpoſition, exhorted him continually not to permit himſelf to be carried away by the exceſſes of impurity; but to no effect.

Fourthly, the wicked example of thoſe of his age ſo much prevailed upon his mind, that he endeavoured to be more impious, to the end that he might reſemble them; and when he ſaw himſelf fur-

* Cap. 19. † Lib. 2. cap. 1. ‡ Cap. 2. § Cap. 3. ¶ Aug. lib. 2. cap. 2.

ſurpaſſed in wickedneſs, he feigned ſome crime which he had never committed, fearing to be ſo much the more deſpiſed; by how much he appeared leſs vitious than others.

Fifthly, the great liberty his parents gave him for play and recreations, as himſelf alſo takes notice.

Theſe things hurried him into vice, and retained him in his diſorders the ſpace of three years, after which he began to open his eyes, and acknowledge his miſerable ſtate. Here, *Theotime*, you will diſcover the immenſe difficulty of withdrawing from the vices contracted in youth.

Being nineteen years of age, he began to entertain more ſerious thoughts concerning ſalvation, which God inſpired him with in reading a book of *Cicero*, whereof the title is *Hortenſius*, containing an exhortation to wiſdom.

The reading of this book, as he himſelf ſays, preſently changed his mind and inclinations, and made him turn his thoughts upon God. He began to contemn temporal and periſhable goods and pleaſures, and to aſpire with an incredible eagerneſs after the beauty of wiſdom, which never periſheth. From that time he began to depart from vice, and ſincerely return to God. Who would not have believed, but that theſe good motions would have been ſoon followed by a perfect converſion? Yet alas, *Theotime*, what is not a wicked habit contracted in youth able to do! Vice and wicked inclinations ſo poſſeſſed his heart, that theſe thoughts of converſion proved ineffectual. The weight of his inveterate bad habits, replunged him into his former ſtate, in which he remained from the nineteenth to the thirtieth year of his age; and the vices contracted in three years of his youth, kept him in ſlavery twelve whole years. During which time he not only remained in his former diſorders, but fell into others yet greater: for as immodeſty leads to error and blindneſs, he gave into the hereſy of *Manichæus*; wherein he continued nine years, joining to his hereſy the keeping of a concubine; in which ſtate he lived to the time of his converſion.

Being about thirty years of age, he thought more ſeriouſly of his converſion than formerly, as he deſcribes it in the ſixth book *. But hearken, *Theotime*, with what trouble he compaſſed his deſign.

After that firſt thought, he remained yet above two years in his evil ways, deferring daily, as he ſays himſelf, to be converted unto God, and to ſeek in him the life of grace, not reflecting on the death he cauſed in himſelf by his wicked life. Much time was requiſite

* Chap. xi.

quiſite for clearing his underſtanding, and rooting out the errors of his paſt life, and convincing himſelf of the neceſſity of a converſion, as he relates in his ſeventh book.

His underſtanding being convinced, his will did not ſubmit. Vitious habits in ſuch a manner poſſeſſed his heart, that they made him dread his amendment. He ought to have rooted out theſe vices one after another, ambition, covetouſneſs, impurity. Ambition and covetouſneſs were ſoon baniſhed, but that curſed impurity kept ſtill a firm hold of him*.

He was ſo enſlaved therewith, that he thought it impoſſible to recover his liberty, eſteeming it a great unhappineſs to be deprived of thoſe ignominious pleaſures, which are the ſource of all misfortunes†.

In ſhort, the difficulty of his converſion was ſo great, that after many combats, which he underwent in his ſoul during the ſpace of fourteen or fifteen years, after the ſolicitude, prayers and tears of his pious mother, who followed him by ſea and land from his own country to *Carthage*, from *Carthage* to *Rome*, from *Rome* to *Milan*, to reclaim him from vice, and gain him to God; (for to her next to God he owed his ſalvation:) After the ſtrongeſt remonſtrances of his beſt friends; after many conferences with the great S. *Ambroſe*, and other perſons eminent for virtue and learning; after all the interior motions of divine grace, his converſion was miraculouſly completed. In the laſt ſtruggles betwixt nature and grace, a voice from heaven cried aloud to him, *Tolle lege, Tolle lege; Take and read, Take and read;* admoniſhing him to open the New Teſtament which he had by him. He took it, and having opened it, found theſe words of the apoſtle, by which the Holy Ghoſt wrought in his ſoul his entire converſion: *Not in rioting and drunkenneſs, not in chambering and impurities, not in contention and envy: but put ye on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and make not proviſion for the fleſh in its concupiſcences*‡. O God, is it poſſible that the change of a ſoul ſhould be ſo difficult! and that vices contracted in youth, ſhould coſt ſo much pains, and ſo many remedies to cure them!

This is not yet all, *Theotime*; St. *Auſtin* being abſolutely converted, was not freed from his former difficulties: for although he never relapſed after his converſion, when he began to do ſtrict penance, and to lead a holy and angelical life; nevertheleſs he felt a long time after§ the conſequences of his former life, and of frequent and very violent temptations; which being occaſioned by



* Cap. 7. † Lib. 6. cap. 11. ‡ Rom. xiii. 13, 14. § Lib. 10. cap. 30.

the old habits of his youth, coſt him much trouble to preſerve himſelf in holineſs, according to the account he has given in the tenth book of his *confeſſions*, and following ones, where he deſcribes the different temptations with which he was aſſaulted.

O *Theotime*, read again and again this example, conſider attentively all the particulars, and ſee to what extremity a vitious habit in youth, when not reſiſted in time, is able to reduce a perſon. Fly the danger where this ſaint was like to periſh, and where many daily ſuffer ſhipwreck.

There is yet the example of *Manaſſes* in the following chapter, and that of S. *Jerome*, Part III. cap. 9. art. 8.

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## CHAP. XII.

*Examples of thoſe who have never corrected the vices of their youth.*

AS in a ſhipwreck, where a ſhip is loſt in a ſtorm, there are many who periſh, and very few who ſave themſelves by ſwimming or otherwiſe: thus in the ſhipwreck of virtue, which many ſuffer in their youth, the number of thoſe who are eternally loſt is very great, but of thoſe who eſcape very ſmall.

You will conceive the ſmallneſs of this number, when you ſhall know, *Theotime*, that in the hiſtory of the Old Teſtament, a thing almoſt incredible, there is found but one example, in the perſon of *Manaſſes* king of *Juda*. For this one, it produces a vaſt number of others, who periſhed in the ſtorm, and died in the vices of their youth; ſome after a long life, others being ſnatched away by death in the prime of their age. I ſhall here ſet you down ſome examples.

Firſt, of all the kings of *Iſrael*, who to the number of nineteen reigned over the ten tribes of *Iſrael*, when the diviſion was made of that kingdom from that of the tribe of *Juda* after the death of *Solomon*, there was ſcarce one, but was extremely wicked from his youth, and continued ſo to his death.

And although the ſcripture does not make expreſs mention of their youth, nevertheleſs it gives us ſufficiently to underſtand that they were all wicked in that age, except *Jehu*, who was afterwards perverted like the reſt.

Amongſt the kings of *Juda*, who likewiſe reigned to the number of nineteen after *Solomon*, there were ſix who were good; that is, *Aſa*, *Joſaphat*, *Ozias*, *Joathan*, *Ezechias*, *Joſias*; all the

the others were wicked. Thoſe who were good began from their youth, and continued ſuch all their life; the greateſt part of thoſe who were vitious, began their wickedneſs in their younger years, and never altered their conduct.

Thus it is ſaid of king *Ochozias**, that he began to reign about twenty two years of age, was wicked, and attached to the idolatry of impious *Achab* king of *Iſrael*, which was taught him by his mother *Athalia*, ſiſter of that wicked king; he reigned but a year, at the end whereof he died in his wickedneſs.

It is ſaid of *Achaz*† that he was twenty years of age when he began to reign; that he did not apply himſelf to good‡, and to the ſervice of God, but followed the example of the idolatrous kings of *Iſrael*, and that he far ſurpaſſed them in impiety, wherein he died, after he had continued in vice for the ſpace of ſixteen years.

*Amon*§ reigned at the age of twenty two, and became follower of the vices of his father *Manaſſes*, but not of his repentance, and died in his ſins at the end of two years, murdered by his own ſervants¶.

*Joachim*‖ began at the age of twenty five, and reigned eleven years; during which time he was wicked like his anceſtors, and died in his iniquities, without being lamented by any one, and alſo deprived of the honour of burial, according to the threat of the prophet *Jeremy***.

His ſon *Joachin*†† having ſucceeded at the age of eighteen, reigned but three months, at the end whereof he deſerved for his ſins to fall into the hands of *Nabuchodnoſor*, and was ſent into *Babylon*, where he died a long time after.

*Sedecias*‡‡, the laſt of the kings of *Juda*, being come to the crown at the age of twenty-one was alſo wicked like his predeceſſors; and having continued in his iniquities for the ſpace of eleven years, he drew upon himſelf and his people the moſt rigorous effect of that vengeance, with which God had long threatened the *Jewiſh* nation. For in the ninth year of his reign the city of *Jeruſalem* was beſieged by *Nabuchodnoſor* king of *Babylon*, and after two years ſiege it was taken, pillaged, and put to fire and ſword, the temple of God ranſacked and burnt; and whoever had eſcaped the fury of the ſword, or famine, were ſent into captivity. *Se-*



* 4 Kings viii. † 4 Kings xvi. ‡ 2 Chron. xxviii. § 4 Kings xxi. ¶ 4 Kings xxi. ‖ 2 Chorn. xxxvi. ** Jerem. xxii. †† 4 Kings xxiv. ‡‡ 4 Kings xxiv and xxv.

*decias* himſelf flying with his children, was taken, and brought before the proud King; who after venting his fury and indignation, cauſed his children to be butchered before his face, and afterwards pulled out his eyes, and ſent him captive into *Babylon*, where he died in miſery, in juſt puniſhment of his iniquities.

We muſt add to theſe examples thoſe mentioned in the ſixth chapter, ſince all thoſe of whom we ſpoke in that place, died in their ſins, and in puniſhment of ſins committed in their youth.

Theſe examples are very common in ſacred ſcripture, the contrary are very rare; and as I have ſaid, we find but one in the Old Teſtament, who was ſincerely converted after he had lived wickedly in his youth, *viz. Manaſſes*, and he in ſo extraordinary a manner, that this example ſhews clearer than noon day, the dreadful difficulty of reforming the vitious inclinations of youthful years.

This prince * having loſt his father *Ezechias*, one of the moſt pious kings of *Juda*, at the age of twelve years inherited his crown, but not his virtues: for ſoon forgetting the holy example and wiſe documents he had received from him, he addicted himſelf to every kind of vice and impiety. His iniquities daily encreaſed until the fifteenth, or according to others, till the two and twentieth year of his reign, wherein God puniſhed his crimes in an exemplary manner. He was taken by the *Aſſyrians* in the city of *Jeruſalem*, ſent captive into *Babylon* loaden with irons and chains, caſt into a frightful priſon, where he ſuffered every degree of miſery and perſecution.

Being reduced to this extremity, he began to open his eyes, and call upon God in his afflictions, whom he had forgotten in his proſperity. He acknowledged his iniquities, and ſued for pardon with a truly contrite heart, and by the force of tears and prayers obtained from God his deliverance: after which he did penance for his ſins, and lived in holineſs all the remainder of his life, even to the age of ſixty-ſeven, when he died.

S. *Jerome* adds to this hiſtory a very remarkable circumſtance, which he received from the tradition of the *Hebrews:* for expounding what the ſcripture ſays in general terms †. That *Manaſſes after he was in diſtreſs prayed to the Lord his God* ‡, he ſays, that it was at the approach of a frightful death, to which he was expoſed. He was doomed to die in a great brazen veſſel, pierced with many holes, ſet upon a hot fire; which heating the veſſel, and penetrating it on every ſide, muſt have conſumed that

* 4 Kings xxi. † Hieron. in queſt. Heb. in Paral. ‡ 2 Chron. xxxiii. 12.

that miſerable prince by its flames, by ſo much the more cruel, as they were ſlow in execution. He was ſhut up in this veſſel, and the fire kindled under him. In this dreadful approach of death, this unfortunate prince did not addreſs himſelf to God, but firſt to the idols which he had adored; ſo ſtrangely was he blinded by his former ſins. But when he perceived that it was in vain to invoke their aſſiſtance, he called to mind a ſentence of the ſacred ſcripture which he had often heard from his father in his youth, by which God promiſes his aſſiſtance. *When thou ſhalt ſeek the Lord thy God, thou ſhalt find him: yet ſo, if thou ſeek him with all thy heart, and all the affliction of thy ſoul* *.

He preſently raiſed his heart to God with ſighs and lamentations, and begged his deliverance with ſuch a contrition for his ſins, that God ſhewed him mercy, and not only delivered him from that frightful death, but from ſlavery, and brought him back to *Jeruſalem*, where he ſpent the reſt of his life after the manner I have already deſcribed. See here, *Theotime*, a converſion after a wicked youth, but a converſion purchaſed at a dear rate.

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## CHAP. XIII.

*Of the great evils which ſpring from a wicked youth.*

*Tenth motive which obliges young people to virtue.*

THE greateſt of evils is that whereof we have ſpoken, *viz.* the loſs of ſalvation, which befalls many through ſins of their youth; it being certain, that ſins committed in that age are the original cauſe of damnation to many. But beſides that, there are many others iſſuing from the ſame ſource, which are neceſſary to be known, dear *Theotime*, to the end that knowing them, you may conceive a greater horror of the cauſe which produces them.

### ARTICLE I.

*The firſt evil*, viz. *death, which the ſins of youth haſten in many.*

I Put in the firſt place immature death, which happens to many young perſons in puniſhment of their ſins.

I do not mean, that all thoſe who die in the flower of their age, die in puniſhment of their ſins, nor that all thoſe, who follow vice in their youth, are puniſhed with untimely death.



* Deut. iv. 29.

I know very well, that the pious ſometimes depart in the prime of their youth, and that this death is a recompenſe of their virtue, and an effect of the love God bears them according to that of the ſacred ſcripture, in the book of *Wiſdom: The juſt man, if he be prevented with death, ſhall be in reſt* * and ſalvation; his virtue having rendered him agreeable to God, purchaſed his love, and obtained for him to be taken out of this world, where he lived amongſt ſinners. God withdrew him betimes, leſt corruption ſhould taint his mind, and his ſoul be deceived with the falſe appearance of the vanity and pleaſures of the world, which delude men, and make them love thoſe things which are moſt oppoſite to their ſalvation.

I know alſo very well, that there are many ſinners who live a long time, and who grow old in the vices contracted in their youth, like him whom *Daniel* calls by that name, *O thou that art grown old in evil days* †; and that the haſtened death of the juſt, who died in the flower of his age, *condemneth the long life of the unjuſt* ‡: becauſe the former gains heaven in the ſmall time he lived, and the long life of the latter ſerves only to multiply their crimes, and encreaſe their damnation.

Yet it is not to be doubted, but that many die young in puniſhment of their ſins, and that the ſins of that age haſten the death of many. The ſcripture confirms this by examples, and daily experience puts it beyond diſpute.

*Job* ſpeaking of the wicked, ſays, *Before his days be full, he ſhall periſh: and his hands ſhall wither away. He ſhall be blaſted as a vine, when its grapes are in the firſt flower, and as an olive-tree that caſteth its flower* §.

*Solomon* in his *Proverbs* ſays, *As a tempeſt that paſſeth, ſo the wicked ſhall be no more* ¶. In his *Eccleſiaſtes* ‖, he admoniſhes you not to abandon yourſelf to ſin, nor to be of the number of the unwiſe, that is of ſinners, *leſt*, ſays he, *thou die before thy time*, that is, ſooner than you ſhould have done according to the natural courſe of your life.

In the eighth chapter of the ſame book, that wiſe king, moved with a juſt indignation againſt the ſinner, wiſhes he may never proſper, and that his days may be abridged; he even expreſſes his deſire, that all thoſe who entertain no reſpect for the Deity, who have the

* Wiſd. iv. 7. † Dan. xiii. 52. ‡ Wiſd. iv. 16. § Job xv. 32, 33. ¶ Prov. x. 25. ‖ Chap. 7.

the audaciouſneſs to inſult the preſence of the divine majeſty, may like the ſhadow periſh in a moment.

All theſe expreſſions are clear in ſcripture, and the examples are there yet more evident. See what we alledged in the preceding chapter, concerning *Ochozias*, *Amon*, *Joachim*, and *Sedecias;* in the ſixth chapter, in the perſons of the children of *Juda* and *Heli*, and in thoſe of *Amnon* and *Abſolom*.

Although we had no other proofs of this truth, the examples we daily ſee, diſcover it too clearly. How many young people do we ſee die, ſome in a burning fever, or other like diſtemper; others in a quarrel; others in duels, the deſtruction of ſo many ſouls; others killed in war; others periſh by dreadful and unexpected accidents? All theſe deaths, which are but too frequent, are often the effects of the divine wrath againſt young people, who contemn his favours, and refuſe to ſerve him in an age to which he is particularly entitled. O *Theotime*, have a dread, leſt theſe puniſhments befall you.

## ARTICLE II.

*The ſecond evil which ſprings from ſins committed in youth; blindneſs of mind, and obdurateneſs in vice.*

CORporal death is not the only, nor the worſt effect of the ſins of youth; that interior blindneſs and obdurateneſs in evil, which they cauſe in the ſoul, is no leſs common, yet far more deplorable and dreadful. *Weep for the dead*, ſays the wiſe man, *for his light hath failed: and weep for the fool*, that is, for the ſinner, *for his underſtanding faileth. The mourning for the dead is ſeven days:* that is, a ſhort time, *but for a fool and an ungodly man, all the days of their life**. For how can we conſider without tears and ſorrow ſo great and univerſal a misfortune, which we ſee in many young people, whom the ſins of their youth lead to a hardneſs of heart, that abandons them to vice without reſtraint?

*Obdurateneſs of youth in vice.*

The number of thoſe is very great, who, after having ſpent their youth in the diſorders of ſin, eſpecially of impurity, become unconcerned for their ſalvation, blind to their own intereſt, obdurate in evil, contemning the moſt wholſome admonitions, glorying in their iniquities, ſcoffing at all the good they ſee performed by others, and wholly bent upon gratifying their pleaſures and depraved appetite,



* Eccli. xxii. 10. 13.

appetite, haſten their own ruin, without a poſſibility of being withheld. O *Theotime*, is not this a deplorable evil? But I wiſh it were not ſo frequent as it is great. S. *Auguſtin* had unhappily experienced it in his own perſon, as he himſelf relates in his *confeſſions*; where he deplores his misfortune in words capable of moving the hardeſt hearts, and which deſerve to be here cited at length, to teach young people how they ought to dread the cruel effect of the ſins of youth.

" That laſcivious concupiſcence of the fleſh, and boiling of my " youthful blood, exhaled ſuch clouds into my mind, that they " overſpread it with dark obſcurity, and in ſuch a manner caſt a " miſt over it, that it could not diſcern the ſerenity of chaſte love " from the darkneſs of impure luſt. Both of theſe raiſing a tur- " bulent confuſion in me, dragged my frail youth into the preci- " pice of all ſort of concupiſcence, and plunged it into the gulf " of wickedneſs*."

He adds, that the brutal paſſion of immodeſt love was like a chain, which kept him bound, and that the noiſe of this chain continually rattling, had made him interiorly deaf, and hindered him from hearkening to any good advice; like a beaſt in ſtrong chains, the motion of which hinders it from hearing any other noiſe. What is yet very remarkable, he adds, this deafneſs was a puniſhment of the pride of his ſoul, which kept God at this diſtance, and thus enſlaved him to ſin.

Behold, dear *Theotime*, whither the ſins of youth lead, and whither yours will infallibly bring you, if you withdraw not yourſelf entirely, and without delay.

This ſubject of blindneſs and obſtinacy in ſin, occaſioned by a diſorderly youth, deſerves a longer diſcourſe; but it ſhall be more amply treated in Part 3. chap. 8. art. 2.

## ARTICLE III.

*The third evil, the loſs of many fair hopes.*

THIS evil is too viſible; there needs no other proof than daily experience. How many youths being likely by their early diſpoſitions to become uſeful in any employ, either to the honour of God or public good, ſuddenly fall off and diſqualify themſelves for what nature ſeemed to have deſigned them, by ſpending the reſt of their lives in ſloth and idleneſs? like trees covered

* Lib. confeſſ. cap. 2.

vered with bloſſoms in the ſpring, which a nipping froſt ſtrips, and renders unfruitful all the reſt of the year.

This happens not only to thoſe in whom the ſins of youth either haſten death, or bring an obdurateneſs in vice, but very frequently to thoſe who have only withdrawn themſelves from ſin after the firſt diſorders of youth, and by loſing, in idleneſs, (the conſtant companion of vice) the moſt precious time of all their life, have become uſeleſs and incapable of doing good. If they have not abſolutely loſt that time, they are become by their repeated diſorders unworthy of the employments they were capable of, and for which God had deſigned them.

That you may underſtand this the better, remember that God by his providence deſigns young people for different ſtates, wherein he would employ them for his ſervice and their ſalvation. But there are two conditions required, the firſt is, that they qualify themſelves by their own induſtry during their youth; the other, that they do not render themſelves undeſerving by their ſins. Whence, if young perſons fail in either of theſe conditions, that is, if they neglect to qualify themſelves for what God deſigns, or if while they are ſo employed, they abandon themſelves to vice, they never arrive at the ſtations for which they were at firſt intended; or if through preſumption they raſhly engage themſelves in employments above their capacity, they never can diſcharge their then reſpective duties, and conſequently are expoſed to almoſt inevitable perdition.

This truth is grounded upon ſacred ſcripture. When God promiſed to *David* the kingdom of *Iſrael* for himſelf and his poſterity, it was upon this condition*, that he and his offspring ſhould live in the obſervance of his commandments†.

A little while before, he had taken away the honour of prieſthood from the family of the high prieſt *Heli*, becauſe he and his children were become unworthy by their ſins. Although in his firſt intention the prieſthood was always to remain in that family, but with this condition, that they ſhould not render themſelves unworthy: the words are very clear in the firſt book of Kings‡.

This conduct of God appears moſt evident in the caſe of *Saul* firſt king of *Iſrael*. God had given that kingdom to him, and his family, but upon condition, that he ſhould keep his commandments. It happened that this prince tranſgreſſed the orders of God

* 2 Chron. vi. 16. and xxxiii. 8. † Pſ. cxxxi. 12. ‡ Chap. ii.

God on two remarkable occaſions, in conſequence whereof he was rejected from the kingdom, which God had prepared for him.

The firſt was, being one day in his camp, forced by his enemies to engage in battle, he offered ſacrifice without waiting the arrival of the prophet *Samuel*, who had forbidden him to attempt any thing till his return. The ſacrifice was ſcarce ended, when the prophet came and ſaid to him: *Thou haſt done fooliſhly, and haſt not kept the commandments of the Lord thy God, which he commanded thee. And if thou hadſt not done thus, the Lord would have eſtabliſhed thy kingdom over Iſrael for ever. But thy kingdom ſhall not continue**.

The ſecond occaſion was, when having overcome the *Amalecites*, he ſpared the life of their king, and preſerved their flocks and all their riches, againſt the command God had given him not to ſpare any thing, but to conſume all with fire and ſword. *Samuel* reproached him for his diſobedience, and declared to him from God, that he ſhould be no more king of *Iſrael*. *Foraſmuch*, ſays he, *as thou haſt rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord hath* alſo *rejected thee from being king* †.

*An important advice.*

Learn from theſe examples, *Theotime*, that God ſometimes deſigns men for employments which their ſins prevent their attaining, or continuing a long time in them if once entered upon. Be aſſured, that if you live wickedly in your youth, you have great reaſon to fear that God will reject you from that condition to which he had deſigned you, and that you will never be fitted for any important charge; God refuſing you the honour of employing you when you are at a fit age, as you have neglected to ſerve him in your youth, and make yourſelf worthy of your vocation, and deſerving of the aſſiſtance of his grace.

## ARTICLE IV.

*The fourth evil ſpringing from the ſins of youth, the exceſs of vice amongſt men.*

THIS evil will ſeem to you at preſent incredible, but you will underſtand it clearly upon the leaſt reflection.

For firſt, if it be true, as we have ſhewn, that the vices of youth cannot be overcome without the greateſt difficulty, it follows, that a great part of the corruption we ſee amongſt men ſprings from that which they had contracted in their earlier years.

Beſides,

* 1 Kings xiii. 13, 14. † 1 Kings xv. 23.

Beſides, it is certain, that bad children become wicked fathers, and wicked fathers make their children vitious: as theirſelves have lived in diſorder during their youth, without taking any care to amend, they concern themſelves but little about bringing up their children in the fear of God; and thus wickedneſs is ſpread from father to ſon unto diſtant generations.

Now if this be verified in the greateſt part of young perſons, it is more evidently ſo in thoſe who apply to ſtudy, of whom it is true to ſay, that their wicked life cauſes the greateſt part of the ſins and diſorders of the world; becauſe they are the men that attain to dignities, whether eccleſiaſtical or civil, wherein they behave themſelves according to the inclinations and habits they learned in their youth, and according to the firſt impreſſions they received. Now when ſuch behave ill in theſe ſtations, the evil is not confined to their perſons, but extends to all thoſe whom they ought to govern, inſtruct, or edify; ſuch perſons inſtead of receiving from them examples of virtue, gather nothing but the imitation of their vices, and the corruption of their manners.

In a word, vitious ſtudents become, in the church, wicked prieſts, ignorant, unprofitable to God and his church, and frequently ſcandalous, idle, covetous, worldly and debauched incumbents; paſtors incapable of their charge, who acquit themſelves very ill, to the great detriment of ſouls. In the world, gentlemen that are proud, quarrelſome, duelliſts, immodeſt, blaſphemous, libertines. In the courts of juſtice, wicked judges, corrupted, accepters of perſons, and who commit many injuſtices for money, favour, or fear, through the ignorance or raſhneſs, with which they give ſentence; lawyers that are wranglers, impoſtors, and cheats. In the civil ſtate, magiſtrates incapable of their charges, neglectful of their duty, who ſee vice and hinder it not, which, in the ſight of God, makes them ſharers in the guilt of thoſe crimes they do not prevent. And from the corruption of theſe four ſorts of perſons ſprings the iniquity of the people, and the overflowing of vice in the world. Thus it may be truly ſaid, that the wickedneſs of ſtudents is the firſt ſource of the greateſt part of the vices and diſorders of the world.

Conſider attentively, dear *Theotime*, theſe four evils one after another, and learn by their greatneſs of how much importance it is for you to apply yourſelf to virtue in your youth.

CHAP.

## CHAP. XIV.

*That the Devil uſes all his endeavours to lead young people into vice.*

*Eleventh motive for ſerving God in youth.*

TO be convinced of the importance of dedicating yourſelf to God in your youth; you muſt remember, that the Devil, that ſworn enemy of man's ſalvation, fearing nothing more than to ſee you virtuous in your youth, employs all his endeavours to gain over you and all thoſe of your age, that he may ruin you without hopes of recovery.

*The attempts of the Devil to deſtroy young people.*

This truth is manifeſt from all that we have ſaid before. That curſed fiend, who ſtudies nothing but to rob God, as much as he can, of the honour due to him, and men of the happineſs prepared for them, knows very well, that to lead youth into vice is the means of taking from God the firſt and greateſt acknowledgement which men owe to him: In the ſecond place, how injurious to God a wicked life of youth is: thirdly the dreadful conſequence of this, *viz.* a deep engagement in ſin, an hardneſs of heart, and impatience of mind. Moreover, he underſtands very well, that there is no other more certain way to fill the earth with iniquities, and to damn mankind. This is the reaſon why he employs all his induſtry to corrupt the innocence of youth, as the firſt ſource of ſalvation and all other bleſſings. He knows well, that to poiſon the waters of a fountain, it is ſufficient to caſt venom into the ſpring, which communicates it eaſily to all the brooks: and that to conquer a realm, the beſt method is to ſecure the frontier places, which give entrance into the heart of the country.

This curſed fiend underſtands well how to put in practice the miſchief he taught *Pharaoh* *, to whom he ſuggeſted the deſtruction of all the male infants of the *Iſraelites*, that ſo he might exterminate the people of God.

He exerciſes daily both the malice and the cruelty of *Nabuchodonoſor* †, who having taken king *Sedecias* with his children, at the ſacking of *Jeruſalem*, cauſed the children's throats to be cut before the father's face, and ſatisfied himſelf with putting out the father's eyes, without taking away his life. Thus this cruel enemy employs all his malice to murder the children by ſin, and ſtrives to blind interiorly the parents, that neither ſeeing nor caring for the loſs of their children, they may not deliver them from ſuch imminent danger. The

* Exod. i. † 4 Kings xxv.

The ſame king returning into his country, proud and elated with his victories, carried, as the faireſt part of his triumph, the young people of the city of *Jeruſalem* priſoners before him, as is related by the prophet *Jeremy* *. He left nothing in that deſolate city more to be lamented, than the deplorable loſs of the young people, which the ſame prophet bewails above all its other calamities.

Thus, dear *Theotime*, this deteſtable fiend, who, as the ſcripture ſays, is eſtabliſhed king over all the proud, has no greater reaſon inſolently to triumph over the holy church, than by the multitude of young people which he keeps in ſlavery by ſin. And this pious mother accounts no loſs more deplorable than that of her dear children, which the enemy ſnatches from her in their youth, ſome by one vice, others by another, but moſt by the ſins of impurity, which is the ſtrongeſt chain by which he holds them in captivity; thus exerciſing the rage he has conceived againſt her from her firſt eſtabliſhment, and continuing the war he has ſworn to wage againſt all her children, according to the revelation made to St *John* in the *Apocalyſe* †.

Laſtly, This war of the enemy of mankind againſt young people is a thing ſo manifeſt, that the ſame S. *John* writing to the faithful, and congratulating every age for the bleſſings moſt peculiar to them, expreſſes a particular congratulation to young people for the victory they have gained over the enemy, as being thoſe who are moſt perſecuted. *I write to you, young men*, ſays he, *becauſe you have overcome the wicked one. I write to you, young men, becauſe you are ſtrong, and the word of God abideth in you, and you have overcome the wicked one* ‡.

Happy are all thoſe young people to whom with truth we may ſay, that they have conquered the enemy of their ſalvation. I repreſent unto you here the war he wages againſt thoſe of your age, that we may congratulate you in that manner; and that by the perſecution he raiſes againſt you, you may know firſt how neceſſary it is that you ſhould be virtuous in your youth, ſince the Devil endeavours ſo powerfully to corrupt you. Secondly, with how much courage you ought to reſiſt the attempts of that cruel enemy, who ſeeks your deſtruction with ſo much fury. How is it poſſible you ſhould not ſtand in horror of that enemy, and dread, more than

* Lam. i. † Chap. xii. ‡ 1 John ii. 13, 14.

than death, to let yourſelf be overcome by him, who ſeeks all ways to deſtroy you for ever?

## CHAP. XV.

*The concluſion of all that has been ſaid in this firſt part.*

*Read attentively this chapter.*

IT is time to put an end to this firſt part; and, in recapitulating all that we have ſaid to repreſent to you, in ſhort, the great obligations you have to conſecrate yourſelf to virtue in your youth.

It is certainly then, *Theotime*, of great conſequence that you ſhould be virtuous in your younger years, and that the good or evil life of youth is not trifling, nor a thing that deſerves little care or regard, as the greateſt part of the world thinks; but that it is a buſineſs of high importance, the truth of which is founded upon all that is great and ſacred in what concerns the ſervice of God, and ſalvation of men.

1. You are obliged to ſerve God in your youth, becauſe you ought to acknowledge him as your creator and ſovereign maſter, for the being you have received from him, and on account of the moſt ſublime and excellent end for which he has created you, having made you for nothing leſs than to poſſeſs him eternally in heaven, after you have faithfully ſerved him upon earth.

2. On account of the great favour he has ſhewn you, in calling you to Chriſtianity and the Catholic Religion, out of which there is no ſalvation.

3. Becauſe the ſervice of young people is ſingularly pleaſing to God, ſince he loves them with a particular affection, and is pleaſed to confer many benefits upon them.

4. Becauſe you cannot refuſe him your ſervice, without offering him a very heinous injury.

5. By reaſon he hath an incredible averſion to wicked young people.

6. Becauſe your eternal ſalvation has a great dependance upon the life you lead in your youth: ſo that if you ſet your affection upon virtue in your younger years, you will eaſily preſerve it the remainder of your life; and if you follow vice, you cannot withdraw yourſelf but with great difficulty, and perhaps not at all.

7. To

7. To avoid the heavy misfortunes which ſpring from the wicked life of youth; untimely death, obdurateneſs in ſin, the loſs of many fair hopes, and the overflowing of vice amongſt men.

8. And laſtly, becauſe of the perſecution which the Devil raiſes againſt young people, whom he continually endeavours to withdraw from the ſervice of God, and enſnare betimes in diſorders, that he may deſtroy them without recovery.

After all theſe reaſons, I aſk you, *Theotime*, whether you now heſitate what you have to do? Are not theſe conſiderations powerful enough to convince you of the obligation you have to conſecrate yourſelf to virtue in your youth? And if you be convinced thereof, what do you mean? What is your deſign and reſolution for the future? Perhaps hitherto you have not comprehended the greatneſs of this obligation; but now underſtanding it clearly, what judgment ought you not to expect from God, if you be *rebellious to the light**; and act like thoſe wretches, who ſay to God, *depart from us, we deſire not the knowledge of thy ways*†.

The *Jews* being returned from the captivity of *Babylon*, the prophet *Eſdras*‡ cauſed the law of God to be publicly read unto them, from whence they had received no inſtruction during the ſeventy years of their captivity.

That people had ſcarce begun to hear the law, when they wept bitterly, and made the air reſound with their cries and lamentations: ſo that the prieſts and levites who read the law, were more employed to ſtop their tears and comfort, than to inſtruct them. This poor people ſadly deplored their unhappy ignorance of their duty, an ignorance which their own negligence had occaſioned.

O dear *Theotime*, I beſeech the divine Goodneſs by his grace to work the ſame effect in your heart. After reading the truths I have repreſented to you, is it poſſible that you ſhould not be touched with the force of truth, and the care of your own ſalvation? And that after reading all theſe reaſons, which ſhow the ſtrict obligations you have to the ſervice of your creator, you ſhould ſhut the book without making any reflection upon yourſelf, or taking proper reſolutions for the future? I conjure you by the honour and reſpect you owe to God; by the love you owe to his ſon *Jeſus Chriſt* your gracious Saviour; by the concern you ought to have for your eternal ſalvation: I conjure you, I ſay, that you do not read theſe truths unprofitably; and that when you have read them, you do not caſt the book out of your hands, until you have

* Job xxiv. 13. † Job xxi. 14. ‡ 2 Eſdras viii.

have made a full resolution to think seriously on your salvation: to that effect, firmly resolve to lead a virtuous life during youth, preserving the grace you have received, or correcting your past life by a holy and virtuous one, if it has been disorderly.

It is here, where you must open your eyes to see yourself, and deplore your past offences, and the blindness which has produced them, saying with S. *Augustine*, "Wo, wo be to "the darkness wherein I have lived! wo be to the blindness "which hath hindered me from seeing the light of heaven! wo "to my past ignorance, wherein I knew not thee! I give thee "thanks, O God, whom I acknowledge to be my illuminator and "redeemer, because thou hast enlightened me with thy grace, so "that now I know thee. I have known thee too late, O ancient "truth; I have known thee too late, O eternal verity*."

Here it is that you must hearken to the voice of your eternal father, who calls you to him. *To-day*, says the prophet, *if you shall hear his voice, harden not your hearts*†. You must return to him with great confusion, for having so much abused his goodness, and behaved like an ungracious child towards so tender a father; deploring from the bottom of your heart your ingratitude and infidelity, with those excellent expressions of S. *Bernard*: "God by his bounty hath been pleased to shew himself a father "towards me, but I have not carried myself like a son towards "him; with what face can I raise my eyes towards heaven, to "so good a father, having been so undutiful a child! I blush for "having committed actions unworthy of my extraction. I am "confounded at my past life, because I have so much degenerated "from so good and holy a father. Weep, mine eyes, and turn "yourselves into a fountain of tears, and let shame cover my "face‡!"

O happy tears! dear *Theotime*, blessed confusion! which coming from God, and through God, have wrought in you a holy penance, and will put you into the path of eternal salvation, and happily conduct you in the ways of virtue, which I shall immediately lay before you by the assistance of his divine grace. Let me entreat your serious attention.

* Solil. cap. 33. † Psalm xciv. 8. ‡ S. Ber. Serm. 16. in Cant.

*The end of the first part.*

# THE INSTRUCTION of YOUTH IN CHRISTIAN PIETY.

## PART II.

*Of the neceſſary means of acquiring virtue during youth.*

WHEN the holy man *Tobit* had ordered his ſon to go to the city of *Rages*, to his friend *Gabelus*, he commanded him at the ſame time to ſeek the means for performing that journey, and endeavour to find a guide to conduct him thither ſecurely. The good child complying with the orders of his father, meets, by a ſpeciai providence of God, the angel *Raphael* in the habit of a traveller, who promiſed to conduct him, and bring him back in ſafety, all which he faithfully performed *.

Thus, dear *Theotime*, having ſhewn you the indiſpenſable obligations you have of entering the way of virtue in your youth, let me now tell you, that you ought to learn the means for well performing ſo important a journey.

I ſhall lay them before you in this ſecond part; and if you carefully enquire after them, God will ſend his angels to conduct you in the way, and aſſiſt you with his grace to arrive happily at the end.

### CHAP. I.

*Wherein true virtue conſiſts.*

THE firſt means of acquiring virtue is the knowledge of it, and the diſcerning of ſolid piety from that which is falſe and imaginary. *Firſt means, the knowledge of true virtue.*



* Tob. iv. and v.

*Many ſorts of falſe virtue.* Many ſeem to love virtue, who are far from it, becauſe they love not virtue as it is in itſelf, but as they repreſent it to themſelves, every one according to his own inclination. Some think themſelves virtuous, when they are not of the number of the wicked. Others place virtue in abſtaining from certain vices, from which they have a kind of averſion, though ſubject to others no leſs criminal in the ſight of God. Others eſteem themſelves virtuous if they follow ſome religious practices, although on the other ſide they wholly neglect the interior regulation of their conſcience, too often defiled with mortal ſins. All theſe are ſo much more to be lamented, as they imagine themſelves to be in a good way, when they are abſolutely out of it; and thinking to arrive by that courſe at the port of ſalvation, they find themſelves at length in the direct road to perdition, verifying in that reſpect that ſaying of *Solomon: There is a way which ſeemeth juſt to a man: but the ends thereof lead to death* *.

Virtue, *Theotime*, does not depend on the opinion of men, it is the work of God; from him then muſt we learn its rule, ſince he alone can direct in what manner he will be ſerved.

*True virtue conſiſts in the fear of God.* Hearken then to what God ſays of it in the ſacred ſcripture, and he will teach you how wiſdom, that is, virtue conſiſts in fearing God, and flying abſolutely from ſin, and that he has thus inſtructed man in his creation. *Then*, ſays *Job*, that is, in the beginning of the world, *God ſaid to man, behold the fear of the Lord, that is wiſdom: and to depart from evil, is underſtanding* †.

He teacheth the ſame thing by the royal prophet, by whom he gives you this general rule of virtue, *Decline from evil and do good* ‡.

Wiſe *Solomon* informs you of the ſame truth: *Fear God*, ſays he, *and keep his commandments: for this is all man* §; in that conſiſts the perfection of man, for that he was born, that is his laſt end and real happineſs.

In ſhort, the ſacred ſcripture acknowledges no other wiſdom or piety than the fear of God, which it calls *the beginning, the fulneſs, and crown of wiſdom* ¶.

Now this fear is not that which is purely ſervile, that is, apprehends more the puniſhment than deteſts the ſin; but it is a loving fear

* Prov. xiv. 12. † Job xxviii. 28. ‡ Pſ. xxxvi. 27. § Eccleſ. xii. 13. ¶ Pſ. cx. 10. Eccli. i. 20. Ibid. xxii.

fear of the children of God, which makes them hate ſin becauſe it diſpleaſes God, and love good becauſe it is agreeable to him. Like the fear and reſpect a good child bears his father, which makes him fearful to offend, and diligently ſeek all means of pleaſing him.

So that, *Theotime*, according to the maxims of the divine ſchool, true virtue conſiſts in the fear of God, which produces a voluntary obſervation of his commandments, and cauſes a fear and deteſtation of offending God above all things, and ſeeks the means to pleaſe him and retain his favour. This alone ought to be accounted virtue, and that, which is not directed by this certain and infallible rule, is to be deemed falſe piety.

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## CHAP. II.

*That to acquire virtue we muſt deſire it.*

*Second means, the deſire of wiſdom.*

THE knowledge of a thing is not ſufficient to acquire it, we muſt love and ardently deſire it. Love is the firſt mover of our actions; it cauſes us to undertake great things, animates their proſecution, and finds means of crowning the fame with ſucceſs. If this be certain in all other things we undertake, it is yet more infallible in virtue; becauſe the love and deſire of virtue is one part of virtue itſelf, and a very powerful means to attain it.

It is the means the wiſe man gives you, dear *Theotime*, and which he himſelf made uſe of with very good ſucceſs. In the ſixth chapter of the book of *Wiſdom*, he ſays, That *Wiſdom is glorious, and never fadeth away, and is eaſily ſeen by them that love her, and is found by them that ſeek her, ſhe preventeth them that covet her, ſo that ſhe firſt ſheweth herſelf unto them* *. But hear how he himſelf made uſe of theſe means in his youth, and learn to conform yourſelf to that perfect original.

He ſays in the ſeventh chapter, that having conſidered the common miſery of men, who are all born in weakneſs and ignorance, he began earneſtly to deſire this wiſdom, and to be freed from theſe afflictions. *Wherefore*, ſays he, *I wiſhed and underſtanding was given me: and I called upon God, and the ſpirit of wiſdom came upon me: and I preferred her before kingdoms and thrones, and eſteemed riches nothing in compariſon of her. Neither did I compare unto her any precious ſtone: for all gold in compariſon of her is a little ſand,*



* Wiſd. vi. 13, 14.

*and silver in respect to her shall be counted as clay. Now all good things came to me together with her, and innumerable riches through her hands* *.

Having afterwards described the beauty and wonders of wisdom, he adds in the eighth chapter, *Her* (this divine wisdom) *have I loved, and have sought her out from my youth, and have desired to take her for my spouse, and I became a lover of her beauty. I proposed therefore to take her to me to live with me: knowing that she will communicate to me of her good things and will be a comfort in my cares and grief* †.

O what an excellent example, *Theotime*, is this, to make you understand how necessary and efficacious the desire of virtue is towards obtaining it! Learn from this example to set your affection on virtue, and ardently to desire it. Be convinced that there is nothing besides it desirable in the world, nothing that can worthily satisfy your love, or can render you happy and contented; without it you will be miserable both in this life and the next.

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## CHAP. III.

### *Of prayer, the third means of acquiring virtue.*

*Third means, prayer.* OF all the means for attaining virtue this is the most important. It is not sufficient to desire it, we must search for it with all diligence; and that we may successfully seek it, we must go to the fountain-head, and beg it of him who is the author of it, and bestows it on those who beg it as they ought, *If any of you want wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all abundantly* ‡.

This is the means which wise *Solomon* employed, together with that ardent desire of wisdom, whereof we have just now spoken. For in the same place he says §, that after he had considered all the perfection of wisdom, he conceived such an ardent love for it, that he searched on all sides to find it; and that in consideration of the innocence of his tender age, which he had hitherto preserved untainted, God gave him to understand that wisdom is the effect of his grace, which he could not obtain without God's assistance, whereupon addressing himself to the author of all wisdom, he requested

* Wisd. vii. 7, 8, 9, 11. † Wisd. viii. 2, 9. ‡ Jam. i. 5. § Wisd. viii.

requeſted it of him with all the ſtrength of his heart, in the prayer we ſhall ſet down at the end of this chapter.

Beſides this excellent example, the ſcripture alſo furniſhes you with that of the wiſe author of *Eccleſiaſticus*, who deſcribes thus the means he made uſe of in his youth to acquire virtue. *When I was yet young, before I wandered about, I ſought for wiſdom openly in my prayer. I prayed for her before the temple, and unto the very end I will ſeek after her. My foot walked in the right way, from my youth up I ſought after her. I ſtretched forth my hands on high, and I bewailed my ignorances of her. I directed my ſoul to her, and in knowledge I found her* *.

This is the way theſe great men took to acquire wiſdom in their early years. The ſcripture propoſes them to all young people as the model they ought to imitate for attaining it.

It behoves you, *Theotime*, who by the grace of God aſpires to that wiſdom, to imitate them, and follow the way they have ſhewn. Beg daily of God, with all the ardour of your affection, this wiſdom, which removes ignorance, baniſhes ſin, and leads by the path of virtue to real felicity; offering to him from the bottom of your heart that excellent prayer of *Solomon*.

*God of my fathers, and Lord of mercy, who haſt made all things with thy word, give me wiſdom that ſitteth by thy throne, and caſt me not off from among thy children, for I am thy ſervant, and the ſon of thy hand maid, a weak man, and of ſhort time, and falling ſhort of the underſtanding of judgment and laws. Send her out of thy holy heaven, and from the throne of thy majeſty, that ſhe may be with me, and may labour with me, that I may know what is acceptable with thee: for ſhe knoweth and underſtandeth all things, and ſhall lead me ſoberly in my works, and ſhall preſerve me by her power. So ſhall my works be acceptable* †.

With this prayer, or ſome ſuch like it, if you ſay it as you ought, you will obtain all that you ſhall aſk for: but remember that it muſt have theſe three conditions to be efficacious; it muſt be humble, fervent, and perſeverant. Humble, acknowledging that you cannot obtain wiſdom or virtue but from God alone. Fervent, to beg it with a moſt earneſt deſire. Perſeverant, to beg it daily, as there is no day wherein the divine grace is not neceſſary to preſerve or encreaſe it.

*Three conditions of prayer.*



* Eccli. li. 18, 19, 20, 26, 27. † Wiſd. ix. 1, 4, 5, 10, 11, 12.

## CHAP. IV.

*That we must love and seek after instruction.*

*Fourth means, instruction.*

BEsides the means of prayer, instruction is also necessary for obtaining virtue. Though none but God can give wisdom, yet ordinarily he does not bestow it but by the ministry of men, by whom he is pleased we should be conducted in the path of virtue, inspiring by his grace our hearts with his holy truths, at the same time that men teach us by their words. For this reason has he established in his church pastors and doctors, as the apostle says, to teach men divine truths, and conduct them in the way of salvation.

Now if instruction be necessary for all men, it is particularly for young persons, who by reason of their age have little knowledge of the maxims of wisdom, and are incapable of discovering them without assistance.

It is not then sufficient, dear *Theotime*, to beg daily wisdom and virtue from Almighty God, you must desire and seek after instruction and direction in the way to it, from them who know it.

This desire of instruction is so necessary for obtaining virtue, that it is the beginning thereof, according to that of the wise man; *The beginning*, says he, *of her* (wisdom) *is the most true desire of discipline**.

And lastly, that you may be fully convinced, read attentively this excellent exhortation of *Ecclesiasticus: Son*, says the wise man, *if thou wilt attend to me thou shalt learn: and if thou wilt apply thy mind, thou shalt be wise. If thou wilt incline thy ear, thou shalt receive instruction: and if thou love to hear, thou shalt be wise. Stand in the multitude of ancients that are wise, and join thyself from thy heart to their wisdom, that thou mayst hear every discourse of God, and the sayings of praise may not escape thee*†.

Now there are many ways by which we may receive instructions in virtue, as preaching, and books of piety, of which we shall speak hereafter. But that which is most necessary for you at your age, is the particular direction of a wise and virtuous person, who may teach you the true way to salvation. For this reason the wise man adds to the former words: *If thou see a man of understanding, go to him early in the morning, and let thy foot wear the steps of his doors*‡.

CHAP.

* Wisd. vi. 18. † Eccli. vi. 33, 34, 35. ‡ Eccli. vi. 36.

## CHAP. V.

*Of the neceſſity of a guide in the way of virtue, and particularly during youth.*

THIS means, *Theotime*, is the moſt important of all thoſe which conduct us to virtue; it is the guide who makes all the others ſucceed, and without whom it is almoſt impoſſible you ſhould employ them with ſucceſs. The way to ſalvation and real wiſdom is a road unknown to you, you have need of a guide to direct you. This is a certain maxim of the ſacred ſcripture and holy fathers. *Fifth means, the importance of a guide.*

*If the blind lead the blind*, ſays the ſon of God, *both fall into the pit* *. How much more if one blind man leads himſelf in a way he knows not? *Wo to him that is alone*, ſays Solomon, *for when he falleth he has none to lift him up* †. For this reaſon in the *Proverbs* he often admoniſhes young perſons, *Be not wiſe in thy own conceit* ‡: for *he that truſteth in his own breaſt is a fool* §. *The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that is wiſe harkeneth unto counſel* ¶. Good *Tobit* inſtructing his ſon, gave him this advice among others; *Seek counſel always of a wiſe man* ‖. *Eccleſiaſticus* has already ſaid above, that when you ſee a prudent and underſtanding man, you muſt liſten to his inſtructions, and be frequently with him. But above all, take the counſel he gives you in chapter xxxvii.

*Be continually*, ſays he, *with a holy man, whomſoever thou ſhalt know to obſerve the fear of God, whoſe ſoul is according to thy own ſoul: and who, when thou ſhalt ſtumble in the dark, will be ſorry for thee* **, that is, who mutually love one another; watching that you fall not, or raiſing you if you be fallen. By this you ſee not only the neceſſity of a guide in the way of virtue, but the qualities he ought to have, clearly expreſſed, *viz.* That he muſt be a virtuous man; that he ardently deſire the ſalvation of him whom he directs, and be able to ſupport him whenever he is in danger of falling, and of courſe, that he be endowed with prudence and knowledge equal to that deſign.

S. *Jerome* following theſe maxims of ſacred ſcripture, gives the ſame counſel to a young man who is deſirous of advancing in virtue. "My advice, ſays he, is, that you converſe with men of



* Mat. xv. 14. † Eccleſ. iv. 10. ‡. Prov. iii. 7. § Prov. xxviii. 26. ¶ Prov. xii. 15. ‖ Tob. iv. 19. ** Eccli. xxxvii. 15, 16.

" piety. Be not your own maſter, nor enter a way unknown to " you without a guide, leſt you ſhould miſtake your road, and " periſh in your wandering; or going faſter or ſlower than need " requires, you be tired with your haſte, and ſo return, or fall " faſt aſleep in your journey*."

Make choice of a diſcreet and virtuous confeſſor, from whom you may learn how to ſerve God in your youth. Let him direct you in the path of virtue, teach you the true maxims of piety, and diſcover to you what you ought to follow, and what to avoid; let him bring you back into the right way when you have left it, and raiſe you when you ſhall fall; let him warn you of the dangers you are likely to run into; and teach you how to reſiſt temptations, and cure your ill habits; let him encourage you in virtue; awake you when you are ſleepy in the way, and withhold you from running too faſt, leſt you ſhould fall from your firſt zeal and fervour into remiſſneſs, and from remiſſneſs into vice, which eaſily happens to young people. Behold here the advantages of having a good director, whom you will ſtand in need of upon all occaſions.

*Practice.*

For this end lay open unto him from time to time your conſcience, let him know the true ſtate of your interior. Reſpect him, as a man by whom God ſpeaks and directs you; put a confidence in his direction and counſels, hearken attentively to his admonitions, be exact in putting in practice his advice, give him an account of the uſe you have made of it; be not aſhamed to diſcover unto him all your ſins; above all beware of following their example who having committed ſome greater ſin, confeſs themſelves to another, out of a fooliſh ſhame they have to declare their ſins to their ordinary confeſſor.

*A remarkable advice.*

To do this, is to render the direction of a ghoſtly father entirely unprofitable, to expoſe one's ſelf to fall into many ſins, and in the end to be utterly loſt. No, no, *Theotime*, you muſt have towards your confeſſor the confidence of a child towards his father, of a ſick perſon towards his phyſician, ſo as equally to diſcover all that is within you good and bad.

The phyſician, if he be not informed of a diſeaſe, cannot cure it; and the patient who diſſembles, expoſes himſelf to great danger, even death itſelf. Never hide any thing therefore from your director, nor be afraid of making a full diſcovery of all that has happened. If you ſincerely repent, you will have no difficulty of

* S. Hieron. ep. ad Ruſticum.

of confeſſing your ſins to him, who, by knowing your conſcience, is beſt able to preſcribe a remedy ſuitable to your diſpoſition.

But to find this ſo neceſſary a director, you muſt beg of God from the bottom of your heart, that you may meet with a good one, and without doubt he will comply with your requeſt. Aſk alſo the counſel of ſome prudent and virtuous perſon. And when you have found him, change him not eaſily without neceſſity; and if he chance to fail you either by death, change of dwelling, or otherwiſe, make choice quickly of another.

O *Theotime*, how happy would you be, if you lived thus under a good director! you would walk with aſſurance in the path of ſalvation, and would advance very much therein; whereas going without a guide, you will always be in danger of ſtraggling out of the way and being loſt.

Call to mind one remarkable thing, which the ſcripture recounts of king *Joas* *. That king had been educated by the high prieſt *Joiada* in the fear of God, inſtructed in his law, and directed in the way of virtue from the age of ſeven years till after forty; during all this time he lived holily, and the ſcripture attributes the cauſe to the conduct of that pious man. *Joas*, ſays the ſcripture, *did that which was right before the Lord all the days that Joiada the Prieſt taught him* †. But he did not continue in that ſtate: for *Joiada* being dead, that unhappy prince, no longer reſtrained by the good documents and prudent counſels of his religious maſter, gave himſelf up to licentiouſneſs, and to the diſorders of a wicked life; by which he drew upon himſelf many diſaſters, and a miſerable death, which God ſent him preſently after. This example will teach you what value you ought to ſet on a good maſter in the way of virtue.

*A ſtriking example.*

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## CHAP. VI.

### *Of a general confeſſion.*

*Sixth means, a general confeſſion.*

PEnance being a ſacrament inſtituted by *Jeſus Chriſt* to blot out the ſins of Chriſtians, and to reſtore them to the grace of God, there is no queſtion but it is not only a very profitable but neceſſary

* 4 Kings xii. 2 Chron. xxiv. † 4 Kings xii. 2.

ſary means of acquiring virtue and ſanctity, which ought to begin by cleanſing one's ſelf from vice.

For this reaſon I here propoſe it as the firſt ſtep to be taken in the deſign you have formed of giving yourſelf to God.

Now to the end this means may prove profitable to you, I adviſe you to begin with a general confeſſion of all your life; and this for three reaſons.

Firſt, becauſe it frequently happens, that the precedent confeſſions were invalid: as when one has concealed therein any mortal ſin, too often the caſe of young people; or when one confeſſes with too little preparation, without ſorrow for our ſins, and without reſolution of amendment. In theſe caſes a general confeſſion is neceſſary.

Secondly, becauſe although one ſee not an evident invalidity in the former confeſſions, yet nevertheleſs there is reaſon to have ſome doubt, becauſe of ſo many defects with which they ordinarily abound through the negligence of penitents, who confeſs themſelves with very little preparation, almoſt without any ſorrow, and without any amendment. A general confeſſion ſupplies theſe defects, and if well performed, puts our conſcience into a ſtate of ſecurity.

Thirdly, if it be not at all neceſſary, it will be always very profitable; for three great benefits you will receive thereby: the firſt with reſpect to yourſelf, the ſecond with reſpect to your confeſſor, and the third with regard to God.

Firſt, in reſpect to yourſelf; by bringing your paſt life before your eyes, it makes you know how far you are removed from the way of your ſalvation; humbling you before God in the acknowledgment of your miſery, it will make you take notice of your depraved inclinations in order to correct them, conceive a deſire of amendment, and dedicate yourſelf entirely to Almighty God.

Secondly, with reſpect to your confeſſor; It ſerves to give him a perfect knowledge of your conſcience, that he may better direct you, and give you advice according to your neceſſity.

Thirdly, with regard to God, it will be a means of meriting from him more abundant graces to bring about your more perfect converſion. Theſe graces he will communicate to you in proportion as he ſhall ſee you humbled before him, and penitent for your offences. *A contrite and humbled heart, O God, thou wilt not deſpiſe* *.

To

* Pſalm l. 19.

To perform well this confeſſion, Firſt, have principally in view the amendment of your life, and the withdrawing of yourſelf from ſin, the better to put yourſelf in the way of virtue. *The end of a general confeſſion.*

Secondly, prepare yourſelf ſeven or eight days before-hand; during which time, employ yourſelf: 1. In calling to mind your ſins. 2. In conceiving a great ſorrow, and a firm reſolution of amendment. *Preparation.*

For this end, employ ſome time every day in examining yourſelf according to the order of the commandments of God and of the church, and the ſeven capital ſins. For the greater facility, make uſe of ſome book of confeſſion, and write down every day what you ſhall take notice of.

But let your principal concern be about contrition, which is the moſt neceſſary and moſt difficult, and wherein but too many are defective. Here we muſt employ 1. Prayer to obtain it of God. 2. The reading of ſuch ſubjects as may raiſe in you a horror for ſin, and a deſire to ſerve God. This muſt be a fervent prayer, and a ſerious and attentive reading. *Contrition.* *Second means to obtain contrition.*

Withdraw yourſelf once or twice a day into a private place, and there proſtrate yourſelf before God, beſeeching him humbly and ardently that he would touch your heart, and give you his grace rightly to conceive the grievouſneſs of ſin, and the injury it offers to his infinite goodneſs, and ſuch contrition, as may effect a perfect change in your life.

Afterwards apply yourſelf to the reading of ſome book which may diſcover to you the horror of ſin, and the importance of renouncing it. You will find many; I adviſe you chiefly to make uſe of *Granada's Memorial* in the firſt part, (where he has an excellent preparation for a general confeſſion) or the ſecond volume of this work: read theſe, or any other which you have, with much attention, taking every time one or two chapters only, which you ſhall read often, and meditate attentively upon them, endeavouring to ſtir up by what you read, a hatred for ſin, a horror for having committed it, deploring your miſery, and begging of God pardon for your offences, and grace to free yourſelf from them.

The

The day of your confeſſion being come, after having begged of God the grace to perform well this action of ſo great importance, approach the ſacrament with a profound reſpect, with a great recollection of mind, and with much ſorrow of heart for having offended God. Accuſe yourſelf of your ſins humbly and plainly: after your accuſation, proteſt before your confeſſor, that you abhor them from all your heart, and chiefly by reaſon of the infinite goodneſs of God, whom you have heinouſly offended; that you humbly beg pardon, and are reſolved to die rather than offend him any more; entreating him that he will inſtruct you in the neceſſary remedies againſt ſin, that you fall no more, and the means from thenceforward to live in virtue and the fear of God. This being done, hearken attentively to what he ſhall ſay, not thinking of any thing elſe. And when you ſhall be upon the point of receiving abſolution, recollect yourſelf, and be humbled profoundly before God, renew all the ſorrow you had for your ſins, and implore his mercy, that he would abſolve you in heaven at the ſame time that the prieſt abſolves you by his authority upon earth.

O bleſſed day, *Theotime*, wherein you are freed from the ſtate of ſin, and power of the Devil, to be admitted into the number of the children of God, and for ever to ſerve him faithfully.

In order to make this confeſſion profitable, be ſure not quickly to forget it, as it happens to many, who afterwards ſcarce ever think of it, and ſo return to their former life. To prevent this, perform punctually what your director has ordained, as well in regard of doing penance for paſt ſins, as in avoiding ſin for the time to come. Remember to renew every morning the ſorrow for having offended God, and the reſolution you have made not to diſpleaſe him any more upon any account whatſoever.

## CHAP. VII.

### *Of ordinary confeſſion.*

THAT confeſſion is not only a very profitable means, but abſolutely neceſſary to keep men in the path of virtue, is a truth evinced by experience, which ſhews clearly that thoſe who do not frequently practice this divine remedy, ſoon relapſe into their firſt diſorders, by falling into the ſins they had forſaken. So that, *Theotime*, you muſt hold it for an undoubted maxim, that if you have a real deſign to live in virtue, you muſt frequently approach

approach the ſacrament of penance; if not, you will never be diſengaged from vice, nor from the way of perdition; which I ſhall clearly demonſtrate by the following reaſons.

Firſt, becauſe although you may be ſome time without falling into mortal ſin, nevertheleſs without frequent confeſſion you cannot avoid a greater number of other ſins, which being multiplied and neglected lead to mortal ſin. *Firſt reaſon.*

2. Without frequent confeſſion you may be ſecretly engaged in wicked habits, which you will not believe to be ſuch, and will be expoſed to many dangerous occaſions, againſt which you cannot guard yourſelf unleſs you be admoniſhed. Now you cannot be advertiſed, but by often diſcovering your conſcience to a diſcreet confeſſor, who will obſerve them, and warn you to avoid them. *Second reaſon.*

3. It is impoſſible that you ſhould continue long without being aſſaulted by temptations, and particularly againſt chaſtity. Now it is impoſſible you ſhould reſiſt them without frequent confeſſion. Do what you will, if you make not often uſe of this remedy, you will infallibly fall, as experience will convince you. He that neglects help, will fall into ſickneſs, and from ſickneſs into death. *Third reaſon.*

4. Confeſſion, *Theotime*, is a remedy againſt ſin: 1. Becauſe it being a ſacrament, it gives grace to reſiſt it. 2. Becauſe it makes us renew the deteſtation of ſin, and the reſolution not to commit it any more. 3. Becauſe the admonitions of the ghoſtly father in confeſſion awake the penitent and encourage him anew to fly from ſin, and to be faithful to God. 4. Becauſe the penitent declaring his ſins and temptations to his confeſſor, learns from him the means to reſiſt them; even this only diſcovering of the temptations, is an effectual remedy to overcome them. The evil ſpirit fears nothing ſo much as to be diſcovered; he is a ſerpent which hides himſelf when he would bite, and flies away when he is perceived; he is a night thief, who has no mind to appear in open day; he has no deeper ſtratagem for deſtroying young ſouls, than by keeping them ſilent in the affairs of their conſcience, and hindering them from manifeſting to any one the ſtate of their ſouls, to the end, that in this pernicious ſilence they may find no help to reſiſt temptations, nor means to withdraw themſelves from their vices. "Sin (ſays S. *Bernard*) is ſoon cured "when it is declared, but it increaſes by ſilence; if one diſcover "it, *Fourth reaſon.*

" it, from great it becomes little; and if one conceal it, of little it " becomes great*:

After theſe reaſons I doubt not, dear *Theotime*, but that you are fully convinced of the neceſſity of confeſſing often: and ſince this is an affair of great conſequence, and many faults are too often committed therein, I have much advice to give you, which I beſeech you to read attentively, in order to put the ſame into practice.

## CHAP. VIII.

*Important advice concerning confeſſion.*

1. CONFESS yourſelf at leaſt once a month. If you have frequent temptations, you ought to confeſs oftner, and principally when you perceive the temptations beginning to aſſault you moſt ſtrongly. Take notice of this, for it is of great importance, and for want of practiſing it, many unhappily relapſe into ſin.

2. Avoid the fault of many, who never think of confeſſing themſelves, but when they have yielded to a temptation. It is a deplorable abuſe, by which the Devil unfortunately ſeduces many ſouls. For what a great folly is it, not to apply a remedy, till fallen into a mortal diſtemper, which might have been prevented if taken in time? According to the counſel of the wiſe man, *Before ſickneſs take a medicine* †.

3. Beware of a ſtill greater fault of thoſe, who having been ſubdued by a temptation, inſtead of quickly raiſing themſelves, and having recourſe to the ſacrament of penance, yield to all occaſions, and neglect to confeſs themſelves, whether through fear, remiſsneſs, or neglect of their ſalvation, until ſome great holy day obliges them, without which they would never think of employing the neceſſary remedy. This abuſe is common amongſt young perſons, and the cauſe that many fall back after good reſolutions, and frequently plunge themſelves deeper into vice. We muſt not loſe courage for having fallen, but raiſe ourſelves immediately, and make uſe of that ſlip for our advantage, and ſtand more upon our guard againſt future relapſes into ſin.

4. Confeſs yourſelf to your ordinary confeſſor as often as you can; ſo that nevertheleſs if you find him not, you go to another, and let not his abſence be the cauſe of your failing to confeſs yourſelf, when there is a reaſon for it.

5. Be

* S. Bern. Serm. de interiori domo. cap. 37. † Eccli. xviii. 20.

5. Be assured that the Devil will use all his endeavours to hinder you from confessing often; he will oppose all obstacles imaginable: sometimes he will make you believe it too much trouble, sometimes that you are not sufficiently prepared, sometimes that you have no need; at another time he makes some business fall out; oftentimes he will raise up some disgust against confession; at other times, and that very frequently, he will endeavour to withdraw you from it by a certain foolish shame, which he is accustomed to stir up in those of your age, by which he makes them blush at wholsome acts of piety. Nothing will be omitted to deter you from so profitable and necessary a means of salvation. But pass by all these hinderances, and look upon all those thoughts, which aim at withdrawing you from confession when requisite, as temptations of the Devil.

Now to confess well, endeavour to observe diligently that which follows.

*Means of making a good confession.*

1. Examine your conscience in the best manner that you can concerning the sins to which you are most inclined.

2. After examination stir up in yourself a sorrow for having offended God, and beg pardon of him with all your heart.

3. Approach to confession with much respect and modesty, representing to yourself that you are going to appear before God, as before a judge, to implore his mercy; and if you be obliged to wait, keep yourself in an humble and modest posture, praying or reading some good book.

4. Declare your sins humbly and plainly, making your confessor understand them clearly. There are some who confess but half their sins, and expect that the confessor should ask the rest; this is a great abuse, which frequently makes the confessions null, and sacrilegious.

5. Have a great care never to conceal a mortal sin in confession through shame or any other motive. That is a very heinous offence, which often happens to young persons, and particularly with regard to certain sins of impurity, which they dare not discover, through an unhappy bashfulness, which makes them frequently commit great sacrileges, and keeps them in a continual state of mortal sin. O *Theotime*, never fall into that disaster, by which the Devil seduces, and unhappily ruins too many young persons.

6. Seek not by your confessions the esteem of your ghostly father, but to be healed of your sins, and directed by him in the way of salvation.

7. Having

7. Having made your confeſſion, give ear attentively to the admonitions of your ghoſtly father, and to the advice he ſhall give you, and do not imitate many, who think of nothing but calling to mind their ſins, while the confeſſor ſpeaks to them; have a care of this fault, for it is common, and makes one loſe almoſt all the advantage of confeſſion.

8. Before your ghoſtly father gives you abſolution, and alſo whilſt he ſhall pronounce it, beg pardon of God for your ſins with much ſorrow and regret for having committed them, with a firm reſolution, by the aſſiſtance of his grace, to endeavour to amend. You muſt deteſt mortal ſins, as infinitely oppoſite to the goodneſs of God and your ſalvation; for other ſins, you muſt be ſorry becauſe they are diſpleaſing to God, and muſt always have a reſolution to correct them in yourſelf as much as you can.

9. Perform your penance punctually and devoutly.

10. Accuſtom yourſelf on the day of your confeſſion to reflect on the principal ſins into which you have fallen: call to mind the advice your ghoſtly father gave you, and purpoſe to put it into practice.—See more on this ſubject in the ſecond volume of this work.

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## CHAP. IX.

### *Of holy Communion.*

OUR Saviour and Redeemer *Jeſus Chriſt* had ſo great a deſire of our ſanctification and eternal happineſs, that he was not ſatisfied with the inſtitution of the ſacrament of penance, wherein he left his power to his apoſtles of forgiving our ſins, but by an incomprehenſible exceſs of his love he has left us the moſt bleſſed ſacrament of the euchariſt, wherein he really gives himſelf for the nouriſhment of our ſouls, to preſerve them in the life of grace, to cure them of their diſtempers, to ſtrengthen them in their weakneſſes, and conduct them happily unto life eternal.

From whence it follows, that the holy communion is a neceſſary means for thoſe who aſpire to virtue, and that thoſe who have a true deſire of their ſalvation, ought to make themſelves worthy to approach frequently unto it. *Except you eat*, ſays he himſelf, *the fleſh of the ſon of man, and drink his blood, you ſhall not have life in you* *.

It

* John vi. 54.

It is from this living fountain, dear *Theotime*, you may draw abundant supplies of divine grace, and of all virtues neceſſary for you. You ſeek after wiſdom, and here you receive the eternal wiſdom in perſon. You deſire purity, and here you receive purity itſelf. You want force to preſerve virtue amidſt the dangers of this life, and here you receive the author of all power, who can defend you againſt every thing that oppoſes your ſalvation.

Refuſe not then the grace of this divine Saviour, who with ſuch an admirable love gives himſelf to you. That perſon evidently ſhews he has no deſire of ſalvation, who neglects to receive the very author of ſalvation.

Now as the fruit of communion depends upon communicating with requiſite diſpoſitions, the following are the admonitions you muſt obſerve in order to communicate well.

## CHAP. X.

### *Advice for communicating well.*

*What is to be done to communicate well.*

PRepare yourſelf in the beſt manner poſſible. Beg of God, in your morning prayers, the grace of preparing yourſelf to receive him worthily. All the morning keep your mind much recollected, by reflecting upon the great action you are about to perform, and ſay often within yourſelf that which *David* ſaid when he prepared to build a temple for God. *The work is great, for a houſe is prepared not for man, but for God**. It is *Jeſus Chriſt, Theotime*, true God and true man, for whom you prepare a habitation in your ſoul; you muſt then prepare one worthy of him.

2. Be diligent in going to church to offer your prayers to God, and confeſs your ſins; at which time aſk of your confeſſor, whether he think it convenient you ſhould communicate, and if he judge it fit, prepare yourſelf after this manner.

*Preparation for communion.*

3. Take about half an hour before communion, to recollect your thoughts within yourſelf. 1. Humble yourſelf profoundly before our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*, acknowledging yourſelf unworthy to receive him; unworthy by reaſon of his greatneſs and ſanctity, unworthy on account of your own ſins. *Is it then to be thought* (ſaid Solomon having



* 1 Chron. xxix. 1.

having built his temple) *that God ſhould indeed dwell upon earth*?* Say the ſame with regard to yourſelf. 2. Beg of him pardon for your ſins, which make you unworthy to receive him. 3. Implore his grace to receive him worthily, that is, with a pure conſcience, with a lively faith, with a profound humility, with an ardent love of his goodneſs, and with an inviolable reſolution to ſerve him all your life. If you know any prayers for communion, ſay them, but with attention and devotion.

The time of communion being come, leave your vocal prayers, approach modeſtly to the altar, with your eyes caſt down, not looking on one ſide or the other, nor preſſing to come firſt, but letting the crowd paſs, if there be any. Being upon your knees, adore our Lord from the bottom of your heart; and after having ſaid, *I confeſs*, &c. and *Lord I am not worthy*, &c. with a true ſentiment of your own unworthineſs, with a firm faith, and moſt profound humility, receive the God of heaven, and the Saviour of your ſoul.

*After communion.* Being retired from the altar, ſay not preſently vocal prayers in your book, but entertain yourſelf ſome time with your Saviour whom you enjoy within you. 1. Adore his immenſe greatneſs. 2. Admire his goodneſs, in coming to viſit you, ſaying to him that which St. *Elizabeth* ſaid to the B. Virgin, *Whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord ſhould come to me†?* Acknowledge that you are undeſerving of that favour. 3. Aſk pardon for your ſins, and ſorrow for having offended God, who gives himſelf to you with ſo much love and goodneſs. Proteſt to him, that you will always love him, and never ſeparate yourſelf from him again. 4. Repreſent to him the neceſſities of your ſoul, begging of him the graces you ſtand moſt in need of, to reſiſt temptations, to avoid wicked company and occaſions of offending God, and to correct all your evil habits. 5. Give him thanks for the favour he has done you, in giving himſelf to you; and in acknowledgment of his benefits, offer him your ſoul and its powers, your life, all that you have, and all you can do to love and ſerve him for ever. All this muſt be performed in a ſhort time, but with much fervour. Return modeſtly from the church, and make all the reſt of the day reliſh of this pious action.

You may read the Inſtruction for communion we have joined to that of penance.

CHAP.

* 3 Kings viii. 27. † Luc. i. 43.

## CHAP. XI.

### *Of morning prayer.*

*Ninth means, morning prayer.*

CONfeſſion and communion are very efficacious means of acquiring virtue, but they become unprofitable or of little effect, unleſs accompanied with theſe which follow. Morning and evening prayer, aſſiſting devoutly at the holy ſacrifice of the altar, the good employment of time, the knowledge of one's ſelf, reading good books, and pious converſations, are means ſo neceſſary for virtue, that reſpiration and nouriſhment are not more needful for the ſupport of the corporal life, than theſe things are neceſſary for the preſervation of piety, which is the life of the ſoul.

I begin with morning prayer, which the wiſe man, amongſt the means he aſſigns for obtaining wiſdom, recommends earneſtly to you. *He will give his heart to reſort early to the Lord, that made him, and he will pray in the ſight of the moſt high. He will open his mouth in prayer, and will make ſupplication for his ſins* *.

I wiſh this excellent document were deeply engraven in the minds of men, and principally of young perſons, as one of the moſt important for living virtuouſly. If you ſincerely aſpire to virtue, dear *Theotime*, you will punctually follow this inſtruction, which is one of the moſt neceſſary you can receive.

We owe to God all our actions, but chiefly the firſt in the morning; it is that, which is moſt agreeable to him, it is by that we conſecrate the reſt to him: by it we draw down the divine bleſſings upon all our works, and collect the divine grace for the whole day; as the *Iſraelites* in the deſert gathered in the morning the manna of heaven which ſupported them all the day.

What is very remarkable in that manna, is, that thoſe who failed to gather it in the morning found it not preſently after, becauſe it was melted at the riſing of the ſun, whereof the ſcripture gives this excellent reaſon, *viz.* that God who ſhowered it down every morning, cauſed it to be diſſolved with the firſt beams of the ſun; *That it might be known to all, that we muſt prevent the ſun to bleſs thee, and adore thee at the dawning of the light* †.

But remember, *Theotime*, to perform this action in the manner the wiſe man preſcribes; for he would not have it a conſtrained, negligent and indevout prayer, but a prayer with the quite contrary qualities: he ſays, *The wiſe man will give his heart* (that is will



* Eccli. xxxix. 6, 7. † Wiſd. xvi. 28.

will apply his will and affection) *to resort early to the Lord that made him;* that is to say, will give his first thoughts to God, to adore him as his creator, and thank him for all his benefits, *and he will pray in the sight of the most High;* that is, will consider the greatness of God, who is present, and to whom he speaks, and considering the infinite grandeur of the divine majesty will attentively offer his prayers to him with humility and great modesty, and with a most profound respect, begging of God pardon for his sins, and ardently sighing after his holy grace.

*Practice.* To put in execution these instructions, practise what follows. Every morning as soon as you are up, cast yourself upon your knees in some retired place, and there.

1. Adore God from your heart, acknowledging him for your sovereign master and creator, and looking upon him as one from whom you receive all that you have, or are.

2. Give him thanks for all the benefits you have received from him; for the favour of your creation, of your redemption by the merits of his son *Jesus Christ*, of making you a Christian, a child of the Catholic Church, of instructing you in the necessary truths of salvation, and for other particular blessings.

3. Humbly implore his pardon for all the sins of your life past, by which you have so much offended his bounty, and abused his favours.

4. Beg of him the grace to employ that day in his service without offending him; make a firm resolution not to consent to a mortal sin; purpose to avoid the occasions, and endeavour to foresee those which may happen that day, to the end you may be armed against them.

5. Offer all the actions of the day to him, beseeching him that he would bless them, inspire you, and direct you in all your works, that you do nothing against his commandments; nothing but through him, that is, by his grace; and nothing but for him, that is, for his glory.

6. Recommend yourself to the blessed Virgin, to your good angel, and to your patron. Perform all this in a small time, but with much fervour; and be assured, *Theotime*, that if you be diligent in this exercise, you will find the truth of that saying of wisdom itself, *They that in the morning early watch for me shall find me* *.

CHAP.

* Prov. viii. 17.

## CHAP. XII.

### *Of evening prayer.*

*Tenth means, evening prayer.*

IF it be a buſineſs of importance to begin the day well, it is of no leſs to finiſh it in the ſame manner. In the old law, God had not only commanded a ſacrifice for every morning, but alſo for every evening; to teach us, that as we ought to adore him in the beginning of the day, ſo we owe him our acknowledgment at the end of the day.

*The advantages of examen of conſcience at night.*

The principal part of this action is the examen of conſcience, which is a thing wherein you ought not to fail, if you ſeriouſly deſire to advance in virtue. 1. It is a powerful means to cure ill habits, to avoid relapſing into ſin, or readily to clear one's ſelf of them. 2. It helps to diſcover the faults one has committed, in order to amend and avoid them, to continue a hatred of mortal ſin, and a will not to commit it any more. 3. Without this exerciſe we fall into many offences, which being neglected lead us to mortal ſin; we are lulled aſleep, when in ſin, without a deſire or thought of freeing ourſelves. 4. By this exerciſe, ordinary confeſſions are made more eaſy and frequent, we amend our lives, we prevent an unprovided death, we prepare ourſelves for judgment by judging ourſelves. And it is in this action that we excellently well practiſe that admirable advice of the wiſe man; *Before judgment examine thyſelf, and thou ſhalt find mercy in the ſight of God* *.

Be careful then, *Theotime*, to perform daily this important exerciſe in the following manner.

At night being upon your knees before you go to bed,

1. Adore God, and give him thanks for all his favours, particularly for preſerving you that day from misfortunes which might have befallen you.

2. Beg of him grace to diſcover the ſins you have committed that day, in order to aſk pardon for them and to amend your life.

3. Examine your conſcience concerning the ſins to which you are moſt ſubject. For this effect, call to mind your chief actions from morning to night, and take notice of the faults you have committed. Recollect whether you have had any temptations that day; examine how you have behaved, whether you have



* Eccli. xviii. 20.

readily resisted them, or with negligence. Take notice of what company you have been in, and whether you have done any thing indecently, either by giving ill example in word or deed, either in yourself or others; for example, either through persuasion, fear of displeasing or being despised; or in a word, by not preventing the sin of another when in your power. Consider whether you have employed well your time all that day, or unprofitably lost it; and so of the rest.

4. After discovering the sins you have committed, stir up in yourself a sorrow for them, humbly beg pardon of God, make a resolution to amend the day following, and remember to confess them the first opportunity.

If unhappily amongst these sins there should be any that were mortal, rise not up from your prayers till you have abundantly deplored your misery, and conceived an extreme regret for having so grievously offended so holy and adorable a God. Beg of him pardon with all the contrition of your heart, and protest that you will confess it as soon as possible.

Beg of him that you may not die in that wretched state. Alas! dear *Theotime*, is it possible a soul can sleep without fear and dread, whilst under the weight of mortal sin! If you have no such dread, you ought to look upon such an insensibility with horror, as a snare by which the Devil endeavours to ruin you for ever.

5. Recommend to God your soul and body; desire him that he will preserve you from all misfortunes that night, and principally from sin. Offer your prayers to the Blessed Virgin, your angel-guardian, your patron, and all the saints together. And as at the beginning of the day you begged of God the grace to live well, so at the end remember to beg of him the grace to die well. The end we make of every day, is emblematical of the end we shall one day make of our lives. Finish therefore every day as you would one day finish your life.

*An important advice.*

## CHAP. XIII.

### *Of assisting devoutly at the holy sacrifice of the altar.*

*Eleventh means.* THE most holy and adorable sacrifice of the mass is the greatest of all mysteries, and the supreme act of our religion: it is a sacrifice which our Saviour

Saviour *Jesus Christ* has instituted, wherein by the real oblation of his body and blood, 1. We give to God the greatest honour he can receive; 2. We worthily return him thanks for his benefits; 3. We render him propitious in pardoning our offences; 4. We obtain his grace and favour. What the ancient law did by four kinds of sacrifices, we perform in a more perfect manner, by this alone, which is altogether *latreutic*, that is, honouring God; *eucharistic*, that is, giving thanks to God; *propitiatory* and *impetratory*.

They who are present at this holy sacrifice partake of these four effects, and receive great advantages thereby, provided they assist at it as they ought.

To assist at it as we ought, three things are necessary, *attention*, *respect*, and *devotion*. *Attention*, to have the mind present, and attentive to the divine action. *Respect*, to be present with a great modesty as to the exterior, and a profound reverence of the soul at this adorable sacrifice, at which the angels themselves assist with fear and trembling. *Devotion*, not to hear it negligently and by custom, as many times we do, but with a design to partake of the four effects of this sacrifice, *viz.* to pay to God the adoration due to him; to give him thanks for his favours; to implore his mercy for our sins; to petition favours especially that of converting ourselves entirely to him, and of living for ever in his service.

Endeavour then, *Theotime*, to be present daily, if you can, at this solemn sacrifice; but always with these three dispositions. There are many different ways of assisting devoutly at this holy sacrifice; but provided you be present with these three conditions, and perform therein those four things afore-mentioned, adoring God profoundly, begging pardon of him, rendering him thanks for his favours, and imploring his grace for yourself and others; this is the most profitable method you can follow.

These four things ought to be performed principally from the *consecration*, till the *communion*; as for the time before *consecration*, you may employ it in reciting some prayers, or, if you be capable in accompanying the priest in all he shall say or do in every part of the sacrifice: that is, in begging pardon of God with him during the *introit*, and *Kyrie eleison*; joining with him during the *prayers*; hearkening attentively to the *epistle* and *gospel*, representing to yourself *Jesus Christ* who speaks to you, endeavouring to keep in your memory what instruction you receive from his holy word; at the *credo*, making a profession of faith with the priest; at the *offertory*, offering with him; at the *preface*, when he says *sursum corda*,

*corda*, raising your heart to God to keep you more attentive, and disposing yourself to adore our Saviour at the *consecration*, and performing the four things we have spoken of.

## CHAP. XIV.

### *Of labour and employment of time.*

*Twelfth means.* IT is not sufficient to begin well, and piously end the day in the manner we have said; we must also employ it profitably in some virtuous labour, there being nothing so contrary to virtue, or so favourable to vice as idleness, principally in young persons, as we shall shew you hereafter*. Wherefore, *Theotime*, if you sincerely desire to live virtuously, you must add this means to the former, and be persuaded that, to cultivate virtue, it is absolutely necessary for you to fly idleness, and to be exact in the employments of your condition.

*Hear me, my son*, says the wise man, *and despise me not, and in the end thou shalt find my words. In all thy works be quick, and no infirmity shall come to thee.* (He speaks of the infirmities both of soul and body†.) Idleness weakens the body by the want of exercise, and the ill humours it gathers. But it brings many, and those far more dangerous to the soul, by making it susceptible of every vice; for as exercise is necessary for the health of the body, so employment and labour are needful for the health of the soul: for it is impossible to preserve it without that help.

*Practice.* Employ yourself diligently every day in the labour of that condition wherein God has placed you: look not upon it, as a thing troublesome or tedious, but as an exercise appointed by God to employ you therein faithfully, and as a necessary means of your salvation, to avoid idleness the mother of all vices, and the cause of the ruin of youth. Offer it to God every morning, and when you begin beseech him that he would give a blessing to it, and that it may succeed to his glory and your salvation.

Now if this advice be necessary in all the different conditions of men, it is most of all necessary in the profession of students. If you are called thereto, you ought to employ yourself therein more faithfully than in any other condition, not only because God has placed

* Part III. Chap. VII. † Eccli. xxxi. 26, 27.

placed you in it as a means to avoid idleneſs; but alſo becauſe, if you be negligent in this ſtate, you loſe the time proper to learn in, viz. that of youth, which you can never repair: you loſe the opportunity of rendering yourſelf fit for any employment, as we ſee it daily happens to many, who having loſt their time during their ſtudies, continue ſlothful and unprofitable all the reſt of their life, and many times become vitious and wicked. O *Theotime*, you ought to make a ſcruple of loſing this ſo precious a time: you ſhall give an exact account thereof at the judgment of God. *If any man know not, he ſhall not be known**. And, *He that refuſeth to learn, ſhall fall into evils* †.

## CHAP. XV.

### *Of the knowledge of one's ſelf, very neceſſary for young people.*

*Thirteenth means.*

AMongſt all the means which conduce to virtue, the knowledge of one's ſelf is one of the moſt important; and it is ſo neceſſary, that it is impoſſible to attain to virtue without it. For this reaſon it has always been ſo much recommended by authors who have given rules for a Chriſtian life; the Pagans themſelves have always had it in much eſteem, having received as an inſtruction come from heaven, theſe two words, which were written upon the gates of the temple of *Apollo* at *Delphos*, γνῶθι σεαυτὸν, *Know thyſelf.*

By this knowledge is to be underſtood a ſerious and frequent reflection on the inclinations of the ſoul, the paſſions which rule there, the vices which ſpring up or encreaſe, that they may be corrected with proper remedies according as they are diſcovered.

This knowledge is neceſſary for all men, and for want of exerciſing themſelves therein, the greateſt part of them remain all their lives ſubject to many vices. But it is chiefly neceſſary for young perſons, becauſe they are in an age wherein their paſſions begin to ſpring up and gather ſtrength, if not corrected and reſtrained: wherefore it is highly neceſſary to obſerve them and ſtop them, for two reaſons.

1. They are more eaſy to be cured in their beginning, and ſtifled in their birth, than corrected when they are become ſtronger.

2. "The

* 1 Cor. xiv. 38. † Prov. xvii. 16.

2. "The Devil," as S. *Ambroſe* very judiciouſly remarks, "tempts "men moſt violently at that time, when he ſees ſome paſſions "ariſing in their ſoul; for it is then, that he excites moſt of all "the cauſes, and lays ambuſhes to engage them more therein *."

For theſe reaſons, dear *Theotime*, I exhort you to this knowledge of yourſelf, as a thing which is infinitely neceſſary, and will be of great ſervice; or to ſay better, it is not I who recommend this meaſure, it is the Holy Ghoſt himſelf, in that excellent inſtruction in the thirty-ſeventh chapter of *Eccleſiaſticus*, by the mouth of the wiſe man; *Son, prove thy ſoul in thy life: and if it be wicked, give it no power* †. He gives the reaſon in another place: *A wicked ſoul ſhall deſtroy him that has it* ‡. And in the eighteenth chapter he gives us to underſtand what it is, *Not to give liberty to our ſoul*, *viz.* not to follow her motions and depraved inclinations, but carefully to repreſs them. *Go not*, ſays he, *after thy luſts, but turn away from thy own will*; this is to be underſtood when it is evil. *If thou give to thy ſoul her deſires, ſhe will make thee a joy to thy enemies* §.

We muſt therefore know in our youth the inclinations of our ſouls; that we may repreſs them when they are wicked. It is the firſt knowledge we muſt learn, and to which we muſt in good time apply ourſelves, that we may practiſe it all our life. It is the ſcience of ſciences, without which all others are of no advantage: for what does it profit us to know all other things, and to be ignorant of ourſelves? "Begin your ſtudy with the knowledge of "yourſelf, (ſays S. *Bernard* ¶) it is in vain to extend your know-"ledge to things which belong not to you, neglecting yourſelf. "What doth it avail if you gain the whole world, and loſe "your own ſoul? Whatever wiſdom you poſſeſs, if it be not ſo "for yourſelf, the greateſt part of knowledge is wanting. Al-"though you ſhould know all the higheſt myſteries of faith, and "all the ſecrets included in nature, if you know not yourſelf, you "are like to him who builds without a foundation, preparing a "ruin rather than an edifice." And it befalls them who neglect this knowledge of themſelves, as it did that philoſpher, who being attentive to the conſideration of the ſtars, fell into a deep ditch for want of looking to himſelf, and became the object of laughter to the ſpectators.

Be

* Ambr. lib. 1 Offic. c. 4. † Eccli. xxxvii. 30. ‡ Eccli. vi. 4. § Eccli. xviii. 30, 31. ¶ Lib. 2. de Conſideratione cap. 3..

Be careful then, dear *Theotime*, to exercise yourself in the knowledge of yourself, and in moderating your affections: learn in time that you must not follow all the motions and inclinations of your soul, but that there are many which you must resist with all your power by the grace of God. To attain to this knowledge and moderation you must perform three things.

*Practice.*

1. Accustom yourself to make reflection upon yourself, to observe your inclinations, and the vices to which you are subject; you will discover some passion or vice, which over-rules; either pride, anger, love of pleasures, or the like. You will discover others which will spring up from time to time, and which will encrease unless you carefully repress them. Sometimes it will be an unwillingness to learn, and disobedience; sometimes sloth; often impurity: sometimes lying and deceit; sometimes cursing and swearing; at other times discord and revenge; and so of others. When you shall discover them, permit them not to grow up:

> "Principiis obsta: serò medicina paratur,
> "Cùm mala per longas invaluêre moras."
>
> "The motion unto ill at first withstand:
> "The cure's too late, when vice hath got command."

Endeavour quickly to apply the remedies. In the third and fourth part you will find them for every one of these vices.

2. Since we cannot oftentimes gain a competent knowledge of ourselves, especially in our youth, seek to be admonished of your wicked and dangerous inclinations, by those who know you; as your masters, and particularly your ghostly father. Readily give ear to what he shall tell you, and labour to correct yourself.

3. Above all, be diligent in begging of God frequently the grace to know yourself, and to reform the evil which is in you. *O my God enlighten my darkness**, that I may know all that is in me displeasing to thy divine majesty, and that I may amend it by thy grace! Offer frequently to him that excellent prayer of St *Augustine*, "Lord give me grace to know thee: Lord give me grace "to know myself." This, *Theotime*, is the two-fold knowledge which alone is necessary, that of yourself, and that of God. The first produces humility and amendment, which is the beginning of virtue. The second produces Charity and the love of God, which is the height of perfection.

CHAP.

* Psalm xvii. 29.

## CHAP. XVI.

### *Of the reading of pious books.*

*Fourteenth means, reading good books.*

THE *wise man will seek out the wisdom of all the ancients, and will be occupied in the prophets**, that is, in the reading of holy things. It is another means which the wise man assigns you as very necessary, and useful for acquiring and preserving virtue.

We only become learned by the study of science; in like manner we only become virtuous by our application to virtue. We have shewn above, that instruction is necessary to learn virtue; now we receive not instructions from masters only, but also by reading books. We are not always near our pastors and directors to learn from them the way of virtue. Their instructions, their admonitions, their exhortations, their counsels, continue but for a time in our memory; we easily forget them if they be not maintained and renewed by the reading of books, and meditation upon holy things.

For this reason the wise man in *Ecclesiasticus*†, after he had said, that to acquire wisdom we must hearken to the documents of the wise, adds this other mean as necessary, *viz.* that we must study and meditate upon the law of God. *Let thy thoughts*, says he, *be upon the precepts of God, and meditate continually on his commandments*‡.

Charity, *Theotime*, is a fire which must necessarily be kept up by good thoughts and pious actions: if this nourishment be taken away, she becomes weak, and at length entirely extinguished; if that fail not, she is enflamed, and daily encreases. Now the source of these thoughts and affections is the reading of pious books, which serves as an instrument of divine grace to inspire us with them.

*Example.*

It was by this that God wrought that wonderful conversion of St. *Augustine*, which was begun by the reading of a book called *Hortensius*, treating of wisdom, as he himself relates in the third book of his confessions§, it was forwarded by an account of the conversion of two courtiers, reclaimed by reading the life of St. *Antony*, and was at last perfected by reading the New Testament, which a voice from heaven commanded him to read, saying, *Take and read.*

By this was wrought that wonderful change of S. *Serapion*, whom the reading of the gospel moved so strongly, that he left all his goods, and having given them to the poor, even to his wearing apparel,

* Eccli. xxxix. 1. † Chap. vi. ‡ Eccli. vi. 37. § Chap. iv.

apparel, he went through the ſtreets with a New Teſtament under his arm, ſaying, *behold what has ſtript me.* O the great force of pious reading! How is it poſſible that ſo holy and ſo powerful a means for the converſion of ſouls, ſhould be ſo much neglected!

But it is not ſufficient to read good books, we muſt read to profit by them; for this end obſerve in your reading theſe following conditions. *A profitable way of reading.*

1. Read not for curioſity, and only to pleaſe the mind, but out of a deſire to learn how to live well; and to make your reading the more profitable, remember to begin it in general with raiſing up your mind to God*, in order to beg of him the grace to learn ſomething for your inſtruction.

2. Read with great reſpect, conſidering that it is God who ſpeaks to you in your book. It is a conſideration of the holy fathers, who ſay, when we pray, we ſpeak to God; and when we read, he talks to us.

3. Read not many books, but only two or three well choſen, which may be proper to ſtir you up to virtue, and which may afford you the means: As S. *Auſtin's confeſſions*, *the imitation of Chriſt*, the *introduction to a devout life*, the *ſinners* guide, compoſed by *Granada*, or ſome other, according to the advice of your confeſſor.

4. Read in order, that is, beginning at the beginning, and continuing until the end, otherwiſe your reading will be to little uſe.

5. Read but little at a time, and that ſlowly and attentively; make reflection upon the things you read; endeavour to draw ſome good reſolution from thence, and beg of God the grace to put it in execution.

6. Read often, that is, either every day, or at leaſt from time to time in the week, chiefly upon Sundays and feaſts.

7. Content not yourſelf with having read a book once over, but peruſe it often. If you read it not out of curioſity, but to learn virtue, you will find the ſecond reading more profitable than the firſt; you will the more eaſily become maſter of your book, you will retain it better, and reduce it more into practice.

Obſerve, *Theotime*, what has been here ſaid, and carefully put it in practice. It is too plainly ſeen how little profit young perſons receive from good books they read ill, without concern, or reflexion; which ſhows how little they deſire to advance in the way of virtue; as on the contrary a reliſh for good books denotes a progreſs in piety.

CHAP.

* Pſalm cxviii.

## CHAP. XVII.

*Advice againſt bad books.*

WHEN I exhort you to read good books, I adviſe you at the ſame time entirely to refrain from bad ones, ſo deſtructive to morals, that there is nothing more pernicious to youth.

It is one of the moſt effectual means the devil has invented to corrupt our minds, and which generally ſucceeds. He has raiſed up an infinite number of all ſorts, in all languages, at all times, and ſtill deviſes new ones. The greateſt part are diſguiſed under the appearance of learning or eloquence, or of ſome ingenious invention; and are by ſo much more dangerous, as under theſe diſguiſes they conceal a mortal poiſon, which is deeply imbibed in the ſoul. Young perſons read them with pleaſure and eagerneſs, and eaſily remember them: diſcourſes are forgotten, but books ſtill remain in their hands, which they have time to give attention to, and ſwallow down by degrees their deadly poiſon.

Such books are always pernicious and deſtructive; for ſome produce in their minds doubts and errors; others pervert the judgment, corrupt good inclinations, making that appear good which is evil, and that evil which is good; others teach vice, raiſe our paſſions, enflame concupiſcence, and kindle diſhoneſt love in the hearts of the moſt chaſte; there are none which leave not behind them much cauſe to repent the reading of them.

Theſe books are pernicious to all, but moſt hurtful to young perſons, who are more apt to receive their ill impreſſions through the tenderneſs of their minds and the inclinations they too often have for ill. Youth ought therefore to avoid them as the productions of the Devil, and as a deteſtable poiſon, which hell vomits upon earth to infect and deſtroy ſouls.

1. Such are all heretical books, which teach errors in faith, and which attack the truths received by the church.

2. All impious books, which turn religion and holy things into deriſion; which blame the ceremonies, and received cuſtoms thereof; or which ſcoff at perſons conſecrated to God, as prieſts and religious: ſuch alſo as abuſe the ſacred ſcripture by wicked and profane applications.

3. Laſcivious and immodeſt books, which wage open war againſt chaſtity.

4. Books which treat of love, although they be not openly lewd, ſuch as moſt of the poets, and the greateſt part of romances.

Theſe

These books are more dangerous than those of the third sort, because those openly teach wickedness, and easily create an aversion to themselves in souls which have yet some shame and conscience; but these not seeming to be directly bad, attract the mind by their fair discourses, and by the agreeableness of the subject, delighting the senses, enflame the heart with impure love.

Avoid all these books, *Theotime*, as inventions which the Devil has found out to destroy you. You can scarce ever read them without a mortal sin; for you either entertain evil thoughts, (a voluntary consent and delight in which is criminal in the sight of God) or expose yourself to the evident danger of entertaining them. If you have any of these books, keep them not, part with them, notwithstanding any resolution you have made not to read them. Curiosity will tempt you, and overcome you at the end; it is a serpent, which when you think the least on it, will give you a mortal wound.

Say not that these books are well composed, that the discourse is eloquent, that you learn there to speak well, and many excellent things: for I shall answer you with St. *Augustine*, "That all this is "but a false pretext, by which you deceive yourself; and that by "these wicked books we learn not to speak well, but only to be- "come bad, and commit vice with less restraint *." I tell you, you may draw eloquence from other places than from those corrupted fountains; and that eloquence or science is fatal, which cannot be acquired but with the loss of one's soul and eternal happiness.

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## CHAP. XVIII.

### *Of pious conversation.*

THERE is yet a most important means to acquire virtue, *viz.* to converse with virtuous persons. Nothing has so great power over the mind as example, whether good or bad. Man is naturally inclined to imitation, and to act that which he sees others do. Now if example has such an influence over the mind, it is principally in conversation, where it has so much more force, as it is nearer and more frequent. And if it has so much power over men, it has a wonderful influence upon young people, as we see by experience.

For

* S. Aug. lib. 2. confess. cap. 16.

For this reaſon one of the moſt important advices which can be given to thoſe who aſpire to virtue, and particularly to young perſons, is that of pious converſation.

It is there, *Theotime*, virtue is inſtilled into the mind with pleaſure. The example of others makes ſecret, but ſtrong impreſſions, which move the ſoul to imitation. A man inſenſibly embraces their judgments and maxims, learns to ſpeak and act like them, and believes it his duty to do what he ſees others perform. A noble ſpirit bluſhes to ſee itſelf overcome by its companions: and it is a ſign of a wicked diſpoſition, and of a mind totally abandoned by God, when the example of others makes no impreſſion, but perſiſts in vice amidſt patterns of virtue.

This moſt powerful means is alſo taught by the wiſe man in *Eccleſiaſticus* *, *Treat*, ſays he, *with the wiſe and prudent. Let juſt men be thy gueſts* †. The reaſon of this counſel is given in the *Proverbs*; becauſe *he that walketh with the wiſe, ſhall be wiſe* ‡.

Now there are two ſorts of virtuous perſons with whom you ought to converſe.

1. Endeavour to aſſociate yourſelf with diſcreet perſons, who ſurpaſs you in age as well as in wiſdom and virtue. It is the advice of the wiſe man in the words I quoted above, and alſo in chap. vi. where he ſays, *Stand in the multitude of ancients that are wiſe, and join thyſelf from thy heart to their wiſdom* §; that is, take pleaſure in their ſociety, and avail yourſelf of their wiſe diſcourſes and good examples. S. *Ambroſe* gives the ſame advice to young people in his offices ¶, where he ſays, "That it is very profitable for "young perſons to follow wiſe men, becauſe it helps them much "to learn virtue, and give ſome proof of their integrity. And "that young perſons, converſing with wiſe men, ſhew, that they "imitate thoſe with whom they aſſociate; and it is judged that "they form their lives according to theirs with whom they keep "company."

2. Converſe with thoſe of your age and profeſſion, whom you know to be addicted to virtue: their example will make great impreſſion upon your mind, and will ſweetly draw you to imitate them: make a good choice, practiſing exactly that excellent advice of S. *Jerom* to *Nepotian*; "Aſſociate, ſays he, yourſelf with thoſe "whoſe converſation may give no blemiſh to your reputation, "who are better adorned with virtue than with garments, and "who

* Chap. ix. † Eccli. ix. 21, 22. ‡ Prov. xiii. 20. § Eccli. vi. 35. ¶ Lib. 2.

" who delight not in curling their hair, but who carry modesty in " their behaviour." Keep company with such, love their conversation, often take notice of their modesty, of their piety, of their virtuous actions, and endeavour to imitate them by a holy and blessed emulation, which will not permit you to be last in the service of your creator.

## CHAP. XIX.

### *Of devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and S.* Joseph.

*Sixteenth means.*

ONE of the last means which I assign, but also one of the most effectual, for acquiring virtue in youth, is, devotion to the Blessed Virgin. It is infallible to such who assiduously employ it, because it affords at the same time the most powerful intercession in the sight of God for obtaining his favour, and the most perfect model for our imitation.

Next to God, and the most adorable humanity of his Son *Jesus Christ*, it is she whom we must chiefly honour and love, by reason of that most sublime and excellent dignity of mother of God, which raises her above all creatures that God has ever created.

By her we may receive all the assistance which is necessary for us. She is most powerful with God, to obtain from him all that she shall ask of him. She is all goodness in regard of us, by applying to God for us. Being mother of God, he cannot refuse her request; being our mother, she cannot deny us her intercession when we have recourse to her. Our miseries move her, our necessities urge her; the prayers we offer her for our salvation bring to us all that we desire: and St. *Bernard* is not afraid to say*, " That never " any person invoked that mother of mercy in his necessities, who " has not been sensible of the effects of her assistance."

Although the Blessed Virgin extends her goodness to all men, yet we may say she has a particular regard for young people, whose frailty she knows to be the greatest, and necessities most urgent, especially for the preservation of chastity, which is most assaulted in that age, and of which she is a singular protectress. History is full of examples of saints, who have preserved this great virtue in their youth, by the assistance of this Queen of Virgins; and experience affords daily examples of those who have gained great victories,



* Serm. 4. de Assumpt.

tories, by the recourſe they have had to her interceſſion, and who have happily advanced themſelves in virtue under her protection, and by the graces ſhe obtains of God for them.

Be therefore devout to the Bleſſed Virgin, dear *Theotime;* but let it not be the devotion of many, who think themſelves ſo, in offering ſome prayer to her, more by cuſtom than devotion; and on the other ſide exceedingly diſpleaſe her by a life full of mortal ſin, which they commit without remorſe. What devotion is this, to deſire to pleaſe the mother, and daily crucify the ſon, trampling his blood under their feet, and contemning his grace and favour? Is not this to be an enemy both to ſon and mother.

*True devotion to the Bleſſed Virgin.*

O dear *Theotime*, your devotion to the Bleſſed Virgin muſt not be like that, it muſt be more generous and more holy; and to ſpeak plainly, if you will be a true child, and a ſincere ſervant of the Bleſſed Virgin, you muſt be careful to perform four things.

1. Have a great apprehenſion of diſpleaſing her by mortal ſin, and of afflicting her motherly heart by diſhonouring her ſon, and deſtroying your ſoul; and if you chance to fall into that misfortune, have recourſe readily to her, that ſhe may be your interceſſor in reconciling you to her ſon, whom you have extremely provoked. "She is the refuge of ſinners as well as of the juſt, on condition "they have recourſe to her with a true deſire of converting them-"ſelves, as St. *Bernard* ſays" *.

2. Love and imitate her virtues, principally her humility and chaſtity. Theſe two virtues among others rendered her moſt pleaſing to God; ſhe loves them particularly in children, and is pleaſed to aſſiſt with her prayers thoſe whom ſhe finds particularly inclined to thoſe virtues, according to the ſame ſaint. *Ibid.*

3. Have recourſe to her in all your ſpiritual neceſſities: and for that end offer to her daily ſome particular prayers, ſay your beads, or the little office ſometimes in the week, perform ſomething in her honour on every *Saturday*, whether prayer, abſtinence, or alms; honour particularly her feaſts by confeſſion and communion.

4. Be mindful to invoke her in temptations, and in the dangers you find yourſelf in of offending God. You cannot ſhew your reſpect better, than by applying yourſelf to her in theſe urgent neceſſities, and you can find no ſuccour more ready and favourable than hers. It is the counſel of St. *Bernard;* "If the winds of "temp-

* Serm. 1. ſuper Salve Regina.

" temptations be raiſed againſt you, if you run upon the rocks of " adverſity, lift up your eyes towards that ſtar, invoke the Bleſſed " Virgin. In dangers, in extremities, in doubtful affairs, think " upon the Bleſſed Virgin, let her not depart from your mouth, " nor from your heart: and that you may obtain the aſſiſtance of " her interceſſion, be ſure to follow her example *."

If you perform this, you will have a true devotion to the Bleſſed Virgin, you will be of the number of her real children, and ſhe will be your mother, under whoſe protection you ſhall never periſh. Remember well that excellent ſentence of S. *Anſelm*, who preſumed to ſay, " That as he muſt unavoidably periſh who has no " affection to the Bleſſed Virgin *Mary*, and who forſakes her; ſo " it is impoſſible he ſhould periſh who has recourſe to her, and " whom ſhe regards with the eyes of mercy."

I ſhall conclude with an excellent example which I ſhall produce for a proof of this truth †. *A remarkable example.* St. *Brigit* had a ſon who followed the profeſſion of a ſoldier, and died in the wars. Hearing the news of his death, ſhe was much concerned for the ſalvation of her ſon, dead in ſo dangerous a condition; and as ſhe was often favoured by God with revelations, of which ſhe has compoſed a book, ſhe was aſſured of the ſalvation of her ſon by two ſubſequent revelations. In the firſt, the Bleſſed Virgin revealed to her, that ſhe had aſſiſted her ſon with a particular protection at the hour of death, having ſtrengthened him againſt temptations, and obtained all neceſſary graces for him to make a holy and happy end. In the following, ſhe declared the cauſe of that ſingular aſſiſtance ſhe gave her ſon, and ſaid, it was in recompenſe of his great and ſincere devotion he had teſtified to her during his life, wherein he had loved her with a very ardent affection, and had endeavoured to pleaſe her in all things.

This, *Theotime*, is what real devotion to the Bleſſed Virgin did merit for this young man, and for many others: ſhe will be as powerful in your behalf, if you have a devotion to her, if you love and honour the Bleſſed Virgin in the manner we have mentioned.

But in ſpeaking of the devotion to the Bleſſed Virgin *Mary*, I cannot paſs by her dear ſpouſe, the glorious St. *Joſeph*. This great ſaint having had the ſingular happineſs of being choſen to have the care and guardianſhip of the ſon of God in his infancy and youth, it muſt needs *Devotion to ſaint Joſeph very profitable to young perſons.*

 follow,

* St. Bern. Hom. 2. ſuper Miſſus eſt. † Revel. of S. Brig. cap. 13.

follow, that he will be favourable to young perſons, and cheriſh them tenderly in that age, which he ſaw ſanctified by the Son of God. He ſerved him in all the neceſſities of life, to which he was pleaſed to ſubmit himſelf for our love: he freed him from the perſecutions of his enemies; he bred him up in his infancy, governed him in his youth; he ſaw him ſubmit to his commands; he was a continual witneſs and admirer of the graces and virtues appearing from day to day in his tender years, as the ſun diſcovers its light as it riſes higher.

Ought we not to believe that this ſaint, who had ſo much familiarity with *Jeſus Chriſt* when a child, loves with a ſingular tenderneſs the children of *Jeſus Chriſt*, and particularly thoſe who endeavour to conform themſelves to that divine youth by the imitation of his virtues, and that he will be their protector and interceſſor before *Jeſus Chriſt*.

Fix your affection, *Theotime*, upon this great ſaint, and honour him with a particular reſpect: take him for your patron, and for the protector of your purity. Pray to him daily with much confidence, and above all in your neceſſities, and you will receive wonderful help. Aſk of him, by the care he had of the divine infancy of *Jeſus Chriſt*, that he would preſerve your youth from the dangers of your ſalvation; and that he would aid you to retain in your ſoul that divine Saviour, as he was employed in taking care of him whilſt he was in the world.

## CHAP. XX.

*Of devotion to our angel-guardian, and to the ſaint of one's name.*

*The whole human race, ſeventeenth means.*

GOD loves us with ſuch tenderneſs that he gives to every one of us an angel for our guardian, employing by an incomparable goodneſs his moſt perfect creatures in our ſervice, even thoſe celeſtial ſpirits which are created inceſſantly to contemplate him, and continually to ſerve him in heaven. O *Theotime*, how great is the bounty of God, to depute no leſs than a prince of his court for the conduct of a poor ſervant! and, as St. *Bernard* ſays excellently well* "not to be content to ſend his Son to us, to give us his Holy Spirit, to promiſe "the enjoyment of himſelf in heaven; but to the end there ſhould "be

* Serm. 12. in Pſal. qui habitat.

" be nothing in heaven unemployed for our ſalvation, he ſends his " angels to contribute thereto their ſervice; he appoints them our " guardians, he commands them to be our maſters and guides."

Entertain particular love and honour for him to whom God has entruſted you. He is always near to conduct and guard you; he inſpires you with good thoughts; he aſſiſts you in important affairs; he fortifies you in temptations; he diverts many misfortunes which otherwiſe would befall you, whether temporal or ſpiritual; and he continues theſe good offices in proportion as you have recourſe to him. What is it that you owe not to ſuch a director and guardian?

St. *Bernard* ſays, " that the being guarded by our good angel " ought to inſpire us with three things, *reſpect*, *love*, and *confidence*. " Reſpect for his preſence, love or devotion for the good-will he " has for us, and confidence for the care he has of our preſerva- " tion."

1. Shew then, *Theotime*, a great reſpect to your angel; and, when you are tempted to any wicked action, call to mind his preſence, and be aſhamed to do that before him, which you would not dare to commit before a virtuous perſon.

2. Love him tenderly, and recommend yourſelf to him daily. Beſeech him that he would direct your actions, and protect you from the misfortunes of this life, and above all from ſin, which is the greateſt of all evils.

3. Remember to have recourſe to him in all your neceſſities, and principally on two occaſions:

The firſt is, when you deliberate or undertake any important affair, wherein you have need of counſel and aſſiſtance. Entreat your good angel to conduct you in that affair, ſo that you undertake it not, except it be according to the will of God, for his ſervice and your ſalvation, and to aſſiſt you in bringing it to a happy iſſue. This means is very efficacious to make your affairs ſucceed; it is impoſſible they ſhould not proſper under ſo good a guide, who is moſt faithful, wiſe, and powerful.

The ſecond is, when you are aſſaulted with any temptation, and in danger of offending God. " As often as any tribula- " tion or violent temptation aſſails you, (ſays St. *Bernard**) im- " plore your guardian, your teacher, your aſſiſtant in tribulation." This remedy, *Theotime*, is very powerful in all temptations, and eſpecially in thoſe againſt chaſtity, of which the angels are lovers,



* Serm. 12. in Pſal. in qui habitat.

and particular protectors, as being a virtue which renders men like to themselves, and which makes them imitate upon earth their most pure and celestial life. "From whence," says St *Ambrose**, "it is "no wonder if angels defend chaste souls, who lead upon earth "a life of angels."

*Devotion to our patron.*

Next to your good angel, honour particularly your patron. The names of saints are given us at baptism, that they may be our protectors and intercessors with God, and that by their prayers, and the example of their virtues, we may acquit ourselves worthily of the obligations of a Christian life, whereof we make profession in baptism. "Honour and love him whose name you "bear, recommend yourself daily to him, but to obtain his assis-"tance, remember to imitate his virtues†."

## CHAP. XXI.

*Of keeping festivals, and particularly* Sundays.

*The primitive institution of festivals.*

THE celebration of festivals is also an efficacious means of acquiring virtue, when it is well observed according to the intention of God and the church. These are the days appointed for men to attend the service of God, and the sanctification of their souls. These days being well employed cause men to make a speedy progress in the way of salvation.

The institution of holy days is as ancient as the world, at the beginning whereof the scripture says, that God having created all things in six days, gave his blessing to the seventh, and sanctified it in memory of the accomplishment of his works‡. He prescribed the manner how he would be honoured on that day§. He added also other days, which he would have employed in acknowledgment of his most signal benefits, and for the sanctification of his people.

This institution has been continued, augmented, and perfected in the new law. Continued by the sanctification of the seventh day, except only that it was transferred to the next day after the sabbath of the *Jews*¶, the day of the resurrection of our Lord, of the

* Hom. 3. de Virginitate. † S. Aug. Serm. 39. ‡ Gen. ii. § Levit. xxiii. ¶ S. Leo, Epist. 81.

the coming of the Holy Ghoſt, and of many other myſteries. Encreaſed by many feaſts to honour the myſteries of our redemption, and the favours God has beſtowed upon the Bleſſed Virgin and the ſaints. Perfected as to the manner of celebrating them, which is far more elevated, more ſpiritual, and more perfect than in the old law, which, as the apoſtle ſays, *brought nothing to perfection* *.

This perfection does not conſiſt in material ſacrifices, as in that law, nor in a bare refraining from corporal and ſervile works, as the generality of Chriſtians ſeem to eſteem it; but it requires an interior and ſpiritual worſhip, which is performed by praiſing God, thankſgivings, prayers, contrition, reading pious books, and other like good actions, which are the ſacrifices God expects from us on theſe days. *In what the ſanctification of feaſts conſiſts.*

" The obſervance of the Chriſtian ſabbath conſiſts, as *Origen* " ſays very well, in quitting all temporal concerns, to apply our- " ſelves to thoſe of our ſalvation; to go to church, to hear the " divine word, to think upon heaven, to aſpire to glory, to call to " mind the laſt judgment; forgetting things preſent, to employ " our thoughts upon thoſe which are eternal†."

An obſervance which not only celebrates a feſtival upon earth, but in heaven to the angels, who rejoice; and to God himſelf, " to " whom," as the ſame author ſays, " the ſalvation of men is a " great feaſt."

Such a keeping of holy days as this, is a great means of acquiring and viſibly improving virtue, for which end it is principally commanded. Wherefore I admoniſh you here, *Theotime*, to acquit yourſelf worthily thereof; and not permit yourſelf to be carried away by the example of many, who profane theſe holy days by ſinful actions. Some ſpend them in temporal employments and affairs, without reſpect or diſtinction as the moſt profane. Others paſs them in idleneſs, and vain amuſements, as if feaſts were appointed for nothing elſe but diſſipation, not conſidering that if it be commanded to reſt from corporal works on theſe days, it is to apply the mind to pious things; " and that to keep the feaſt in " that idle manner, is to obſerve it carnally, as S. *Auguſtine* " ſays ‡," and after the manner of the *Jews*, who violate the repoſe of holy days by committing evil, and who would be leſs cul-



* Heb. vii. 19. † Origines hom. 23. in Numeros. ‡ Pſal. xxxii.

pable, in tilling the earth all the day, than in ſpending it in merriments. Others employ themſelves on *Sundays* in ſinful actions, as in debauchery, in drunkenneſs, in immodeſt diſcourſe, in quarrels, in fighting and gaming, and other like diſorders, which change the feaſts of God into the ſolemnities of the Devil, and afford a ſubject of joy * to thoſe wicked ſpirits, as they are the object † of abomination to God, according to the teſtimony of the ſacred ſcripture.

*The firſt thing that ought to be done on Sundays.*

Be not therefore of the number of thoſe, who abuſe ſo holy and neceſſary an inſtitution; but ſpend your time religiouſly upon holy days in the ſervice of God, and the ſanctification of your ſoul, according to the intention of God and his church.

*Not to offend God.*

1. Becauſe the greateſt hinderance to the ſanctification of feaſts is ſin, offend not God on thoſe days; for although ſin ought at all times to cauſe a horror, yet it is then more criminal. "He who "ſins, (ſays Origen.) celebrates a feaſt of ſin, and not a holy day "of God ‡." If the fault of him who gathered a few ſticks upon the ſabbath was judged ſo great, that he deſerved to be ſtoned to death by the commandment of God himſelf; what crime will it be to violate the ſanctity of a *Sunday* with a mortal ſin? If a ſervile work, which is not bad in itſelf, be eſteemed contrary to the holineſs of a ſabbath, how much more a ſin, which infinitely diſhonours God, which profanes the ſanctity of his living temple, and which is the moſt ſervile of all actions? becauſe by ſervile works we ſerve but men, and by ſin we render ourſelves the ſervants of ſin, and ſlaves of the Devil, according to that ſentence of the ſon of God, *Whoſoever committeth ſin, is the ſervant of ſin* §, and after him of his apoſtle ¶.

2. Examine carefully your conſcience upon *Sundays*, and wipe away the ſins of the paſt week by contrition and good works, and frequenting the ſacraments.

Approach them as often as you can upon theſe days, but particularly when you have the leaſt doubt of not being in the grace of God;

* Lam. i. † Iſaiah i. ‡ Ibid. Orig. num. 15. § John viii. 33. ¶ Rom. vi. and 2 Pet. ii.

God; never fail on this occaſion. You would not upon a holy day appear before men with dirty or torn cloths; on the contrary, you dreſs yourſelf more decently in reſpect to the day; and dare you appear before God on the ſame day with a ſoul defiled with ſin? We adorn more richly the altars and material temples to honour God on thoſe days, and will you permit your ſoul, the living temple of God, to remain in a ſtate which infinitely diſpleaſes him? "To what (ſays S. *Leo*) do all the exterior ornaments ſerve, "if the interior be full of corruption and ſin *? Keep well in "mind that ſentence of S. *Auguſtine*, which ſays, that he who does "not preſerve chaſtity in his body, and purity in his mind, only "celebrates a feaſt of ſadneſs and mourning upon holy days. He "gives the reaſon, becauſe it is impoſſible he ſhould partake of "real joy, whoſe conſcience reproaches him with the thought, that "his ſoul is inhabited by the Devil, and not by *Jeſus Chriſt* †." Conſider attentively this reaſon.

3. In the third place, be careful upon *Sundays* and ſolemn feaſts to be preſent at the divine office which is performed in the church. St. *Auguſtine* ‡, in his confeſſions acknowledges the advantage he received from thence after his converſion. He ſays, that at the beginning he was ſenſibly moved with the church ſong, which ſoftening his heart, drew from him abundance of tears, he profitted more and more, as he began to be touched more feelingly by the ſublime ſenſe of the ſong, than by the ſong itſelf. This will happen to you, if you be preſent at the office of the church, not to diſcourſe, to laugh, to look about, to ſalute one another, to ſee and to be ſeen, as it happens to many by a ſad and deplorable abuſe; but with a great interior modeſty, with a mind recollected and very intent upon pious things.

4. Often hearken to the word of God in ſermons, diſcourſes, exhortations, and inſtructions, which are made in the church upon *Sundays* and ſolemn feaſts. At home on thoſe days apply yourſelf to the reading of ſome pious book, which may be profitable to your ſalvation. Converſe with devout perſons, and ſeek their company. Let your recreations be more moderate on thoſe days, and always accompanied with a modeſty agreeable to the ſanctity of the day.

In

* Serm. 3. de Quadrag. † S. Aug. Serm. 225. ‡ Lib. 10. Cap. 33.

In short, employ the repose of holy days in thinking upon the * eternal rest they represent, to which you must earnestly aspire, and in meditating on the great and happy † solemnity which shall be celebrated in heaven, where the sight of God filling the blessed with immortal joy, will afford a feast which will never have an end, but will last for all eternity. It is principally on these days, *Theotime*, that we must say with the prophet, *How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! my soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house O Lord: they shall praise thee for ever and ever. Blessed is the man whose help is from thee: in his heart he hath disposed to ascend to* the eternal temple of God *by steps* of virtue, *in the vale of tears, in the place which he hath set*, or brought himself to by his sin ‡.

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## CHAP. XXII.

### *Of going to the parish.*

I ADD here this subject, because it contributes to the sanctification of holy days, of which I have spoken, and is a powerful means of conducting men to solid piety; wherefore let me give you such necessary instruction, as you may make use of all your life.

*The first institution of parishes.* To give you an account of this from the beginning, you must know, that the apostles, after the ascension of the son of God, having changed the sabbath of the *Jews* to the first day of the week, to be dedicated to the service of God, and to the sanctification of souls, appointed on that day the assemblies of the faithful, where every one should be duly present, to pray in common, to hear the divine word, to assist at the celebration of the divine mysteries, at the participation of the sacraments, and at the gathering of alms for the assistance of Christians in necessity.

The acts of the apostles give us the marks of this institution: *When we were assembled to break bread on the first day of the week*; and S. *Paul* §, *on the first day of the week let every one of you put apart with himself, laying up what it shall well please him.* Where by the words *Una sabbati*, *One of the week*, is understood the first day of the

* Heb. iv. † Isaiah xxxiii. ‡ Psam lxxxiii. 2, 3, 5, 6. § 1 Cor. viii.

the week, so called by St. *Mark**, *early on one of the sabbaths*; that is, the first, as St. *Matthew*† explains it.

In both these places the day of the resurrection of our Lord is spoken of, which was called from thence the *Lord's day*, as St. *John* calls it ‡.

As to the assemblies of that day, the tenth canon of the apostles clearly ordains, that "All Christians who were gathered together "in the church on solemn days, should hear there the sacred "scriptures, and the gospel, and be there present at the prayer, "even till the end, and there communicate §."

St. *Ignatius*, cotemporary with the apostles, makes mention thereof in one of his epistles, and other ancient authors; but above all S. *Justin Martyr*, who lived in the second age, in the year 150; and *Tertullian*, who lived 30 years after.

S. *Justin*, in the second apology he made for the Christians, describes distinctly all that was performed in those assemblies, which is the same that is now done at the parish mass. He speaks in these terms; "On the day which is called Sunday there are assembled "all those who live in the town or country, and there are read the "book of the apostles, or the writings of the prophets, according "as time permits. After the reading, he who presides makes a "discourse, by which he instructs the people, and exhorts them "to practise those excellent things which were read: afterwards "we all rise, and offer our prayers to God. These things being "finished, there is an oblation made of bread and wine and water, "the celebrant continuing his prayers and thanksgiving, the people "answering by their acclamations, Amen. Then is performed "the distribution and communication of the holy mysteries to "every one present. Lastly, those who are more wealthy, give "their alms, which are gathered, and sent into the hands of the "superior, who employs them to the necessities of the poor, of "whom he is to take a charge ¶."

*Tertullian* in his apologetic ‖, says, "That the Christians as-"sembled together in companies, forming as it were a body of an "army, wherein by their prayers they encounter with God, to "whom this kind of violence is very pleasing. In these meetings "a portion of scripture was read, which served to nourish faith, "to raise hope, and strengthen the courage of the faithful. There "were

* Mark xvi. 2. † Matt. xxviii. 1. ‡ Apocalyse i. 10. § Can. 10. Apost.
¶ S. Justin apol. 2. ‖ Chap. 39.

" were made neceſſary exhortations and admonitions to every one; " moreover when any one had committed a fault that deſerved " chaſtiſement, he was puniſhed by excluſion from theſe holy " aſſemblies, which was accounted one of the greateſt puniſh- " ments." Afterwards he ſpeaks of alms, which were there given for the relief of the poor and afflicted.

We muſt here take notice, that during the three firſt ages of the church, wherein ſhe lived amidſt perſecutions, it frequently happened that the Chriſtians had not any appointed public places, wherein to meet, but held their aſſemblies in private houſes, and very ſecretly. But after God was pleaſed to give peace and liberty to the church under Chriſtian emperors, they openly began to build churches, where the faithful aſſembled on *Sundays* and holidays, under the conduct of a paſtor, who was given them to have the care of their ſouls.

It was then, when the uſe of pariſhes and of the parochial maſs on theſe holy days began to appear in its luſtre, which has ever ſince been kept up in the church, and recommended to the faithful with much care, as a thing neceſſary for the ſervice of God, and the ſalvation of ſouls, for the inſtruction of the people, and regulation of their lives; moreover to preſerve the order and diſcipline of the church, it has been alſo commanded as a thing of obligation.

This appears from moſt councils, both general and particular, in every age of the church, and laſtly from the council of *Trent*, which renewing and confirming the former, in the 22d ſeſſion orders biſhops " To exhort their people to go frequently to their " pariſhes, at leaſt upon Sundays and ſolemn feaſts; even to oblige " them thereto by eccleſiaſtical cenſures." And in the 24th ſeſſion it ordains alſo, that " Biſhops carefully admoniſh their people, that " every one is obliged to be preſent at the pariſh, to hear there the " word of God, when it can be done without great inconvenience."

I therefore exhort you to be faithful and aſſiduous at your pariſh church, and not to abſent yourſelf for any frivolous reaſons. Conſider her as your mother, who has brought you forth to *Jeſus Chriſt* by holy baptiſm, and educated you in Chriſtianity: ſhe is charged with the care of your ſoul, ſhe muſt anſwer for you to God, ſhe muſt conduct you through your life in the road to ſalvation, and aſſiſt you at the hour of death. Love her tenderly as a child loves his mother, be obedient to her, receive from her your

ſpiritual

ſpiritual ſuſtenance of inſtruction and the holy ſacraments; walk under her eye and government with reſpect and confidence; receive from others all the aſſiſtance you can, but expect from her your principal direction. Diligently practiſe that important admonition of the apoſtle, *Obey your prelates, and be ſubject to them, for they watch, as being to render an account of your ſouls: that they may do this with joy, and not with ſorrow; for this is not expedient for you* *.

* Heb. xiii. 17.

*The end of the ſecond part.*

# THE INSTRUCTION of YOUTH IN CHRISTIAN PIETY

## PART III.

*Of the obſtacles which withdraw young perſons from virtue.*

IT is not ſufficient for him who conducts another in a journey, to ſhew him the way he muſt keep, and the means he muſt make uſe of to arrive at the place aſſigned; he muſt alſo warn him of the dangers he will meet with in the way, and arm him againſt all obſtacles that may retard or hinder the happy ſucceſs of his journey. Thus the angel *Raphael*, of whom we have ſpoken above, did not content himſelf to guide young *Tobias*, but ſecured him from the obſtacles which preſented themſelves to him in the way; and amongſt others, from the monſter he met upon the banks of the river *Tigris*, from which he not only protected him, but cauſed him to reap a great advantage from it.

For this reaſon, dear *Theotime*, after having ſhewn you the way to ſalvation, and the means you ought to practiſe to acquire virtue in your youth, it is neceſſary I ſhould diſcover to you the impediments you will find in the way. This is what I ſhall perform in this third part, wherein I ſhall lay open the cauſes which uſually ruin thoſe of your age, by involving them in vice; and I ſhall ſhew you the means how to preſerve, and even benefit yourſelf very much by them for your improvement in virtue.

CHAP.

## CHAP. I.

*The first obstacle to the salvation of youth, the want of instruction.*

THE first hinderance to the salvation of youth, is ignorance, or want of instruction. We must know virtue, before we can love it; and to know it, it is necessary we should be instructed therein, as we are not able of ourselves to learn it, bringing nothing with us into the world but ignorance and sin. God says by his prophet, that *his people were led away captive, because they had not knowledge* *; that is, the instruction and knowledge of their salvation. And the wise man says, that *where there is no knowledge of the soul, there is no good* †.

This obstacle is great, and the first cause of the corruption of youth. It is by so much the more to be deplored, as it is common and even general, there being no doubt but that the greatest part of youth are lost for want of instruction. Whilst Fathers neglect to instruct their children in true piety. Masters bestow often the greatest part of their labour in advancing their scholars in learning, and very little in making them understand the science of salvation; children unacquainted with the necessity of it, not only concern themselves little about being instructed, but frequently fly instruction all they can, by which means they continue in ignorance, in sinful habits, and are lost without remedy.

As a proof of this truth, I shall produce two examples though very different from each other. S. *Austin* in his confessions ‡, deploring the corruption of his youth, attributes it to the want of instruction, and to the blindness of his father, who using all endeavours to advance his son in his studies, and make him learned and eloquent, neglected in the mean time the most necessary thing, *viz.* the care of his instruction in virtue, without which all science could but serve to render him more displeasing to God, and more unworthy of his grace.

On the contrary, the scripture making a recital of the noble action of chaste *Susanna*, who chose rather to expose herself to the false accusations of those two infamous old men, and to be prosecuted to death, than to sin in the sight of God, by consenting to a detestable crime, which those wretched men solicited her to, attributes the cause of this holy action to her piety, and to the instructions she received from her parents. She was *one that feared God,*

* Isa. v. 13. † Prov. xix. 2. ‡ Lib. 2. Cap. 3.

*God, For her parents being just, had instructed their daughter, according to the law of Moses* *.

*Practice.* Dear *Theotime*, beware of this obstacle, as one of the greatest impediments to your salvation; love instruction; and be persuaded the greatest evil which can befal your youth, is to be ignorant of the truths which contribute to so happy an end; exert yourself in avoiding this misfortune, which infallibly brings on ruin. Seek after instruction by the means we have pointed out above in part II. chap. 3, 4, and 5; and call to mind often that excellent sentence of *Solomon*, *The heart of the wise seeketh instruction: and the mouth of fools feedeth on foolishness* †.

## CHAP. II.

*The second obstacle, the too much indulgence of parents, their ill example, and the bad instruction they give their children.*

IT is but too true, that the ruin of children springs most commonly from the fault of parents, who are wanting in this great obligation God has imposed upon them, of educating them in his fear, and disposing them to virtue.

Now there are four defects which parents may be guilty of in this duty, which most frequently are the cause of the corruption and ruin of children. 1. When they neglect to instruct them in the knowledge of piety, and to imprint early in their minds the maxims of virtue and their salvation. 2. When they are too indulgent, giving too much liberty, and not correcting them when they do ill. 3. When they give them bad example by their actions. 4. When they instruct them in things contrary to piety. We have spoken above of the first defect.

*Four faults parents may commit in the instruction of their children.*

As to the second, it is plain how common this fault is among parents, and how it daily ruins children. They cares their children with a foolish and blind love, which regards nothing but the present and sensible good of their children, and are afraid of giving them the least trouble, by keeping them within the bounds of virtue by a discreet admonition, or by a reasonable correction; they choose rather to leave them in their wicked inclinations, which

* Dan. xiii. 2, 3. † Prov. xv. 14.

which for want of correction encreasing with age, make them wicked and vitious for the remainder of this life, and hereafter miserable for all eternity.

Thrice unhappy parents! who by this sort of mildness precipitate themselves with their children into the depth of wickedness; like those foolish animals, which kill their young ones by too fondly embracing them. Blind fathers! who see not that this mercy you shew to your children, is the greatest cruelty you can be guilty of in their regard; you would not be so cruel, if you took away their life with your own hands; as by this inhumanity you would but destroy their bodies, whereas by your unreasonable fondness you cause the ruin and the eternal loss of their souls. The time will come when your children, whom you thus indulge, will curse you, demand of God vengeance against you, and will accuse you of being authors of their misery; witness he who being condemned to death, cried out aloud, "It is not the judge, but my mother who is the "cause of my punishment."

Your criminal fondness will one day draw upon yourselves and your children the curse of God. Upon yourselves, because you neither instructed nor corrected them, when requisite. Upon your children, because through your indulgence, they gave themselves over to vice and disorder.

See the example of the high priest *Heli* above, and learn from that terrible punishment God inflicted upon him, what you ought to expect: for all the miseries which befell him, his children and whole house, had for their first and principal source his great indulgence to his children in not correcting them. Hear the testimony God himself gives thereof: *I will judge*, says he, *his house for ever, for iniquity, because he* (Heli) *knew that his sons did wickedly, and did not chastise them**.

I cannot sufficiently exaggerate this fault of parents, *Theotime*, to raise in you so great a horror as it deserves. It is to exhort you, if God has blessed you with wise and virtuous parents, who instruct you in virtue, and reprehend you when faulty, to acknowledge the obligation you owe to God, and make good use of this high favour, by rendering yourself docile, and easy to be guided by them. But on the contrary, if your parents, forgetful of their own duty and your salvation, fail to reprehend you when faulty, do not set a value on such indulgence, but look upon it as the most pernicious and destructive of all things, and fear lest you be ruined by their



* 1 Kings iii. 13.

unhappy indulgence. Beg of God very earneſtly that he would change their hearts, and give you maſters who may ſupply their defect, and take notice of your conduct to reform it, if you ſhould wander never ſo little out of the path of virtue.

I ſay the ſame, if your parents be not only negligent in reprehending you, but, what is yet worſe, if they give you ill example, teaching you, as it often happens, by their actions, to love the pleaſures of this life, to deſire riches, to affect vanity, to be proud, ambitious, paſſionate, revengeful, not to ſuffer the leaſt injury, to be immodeſt in words, addicted to intemperance, to drunkenneſs, to impurity, and other ſuch ſins, and yet more, if they be ſo miſerable as to teach you by their diſcourſes any of theſe vices, approve or praiſe you when you have committed them: Dear child ſtand in fear upon all theſe occaſions, your ſalvation cannot be in greater danger; and having recourſe to God, beſeech him that he would permit you to diſcern good from evil, that he would ſtrengthen your mind againſt the bad impreſſions you ſhall receive, and that he will not permit you to be loſt through their fault, who ought to contribute moſt to your ſalvation.

## CHAP. III.

*The third obſtacle to the ſalvation of youth, untractableneſs.*

SAINT *Jerome* very juſtly remarks, "that although the depravity of children ſprings often from the fault of parents and maſters, yet it very frequently proceeds alſo from the children themſelves, who will not receive inſtruction;" this fault is called *untractableneſs* *.

This untractableneſs is a want of ſubmiſſion to the conduct of others, or a ſecret preſumption of one's ſelf, by which we will not be informed of the truths we ought to know, nor receive advice in thoſe things we ought to do, nor be reproved and corrected when we have erred, nor exhorted to good when we have departed from it.

*A very bad quality of the mind.* This vice is one of the worſt qualities a mind can be infected with.

*Its cauſes.* For if we conſider its cauſes, it proceeds from pride, which makes us contemn all that comes from another; or from obſtinacy, or confidence in our own judgment, or from a too great levity of mind,

* St Hier. in cap. 6 Michææ.

mind, which thinks upon nothing with care, but ſlights the moſt intereſting concerns.

If we conſider its effects, it alone is capable of leading youth into all manner of vice, becauſe it takes away all means of correction or amendment; for how ſhould one do good if he will not know it? How correct his faults if he will not be rebuked? The ſick who will not own his diſtemper, and rejects the proper remedies, muſt not expect a cure. *Its effects.*

The book of *Proverbs* ſtrongly inveighs againſt this vice, as one of the greateſt obſtacles to ſalvation, and frequently exhorts young perſons to receive inſtruction, counſel, and admonition.

As for inſtruction, it ſays, that *he that rejecteth wiſdom, and diſcipline, is unhappy* *. *The wiſe of heart receiveth precepts: a fool is beaten with lips* †. *The heart of the wicked ſeeketh after evils, but the righteous heart ſeeketh after knowledge* ‡. *Haſt thou ſeen a man wiſe in his own conceit? There ſhall be more hope of a fool than of him* §. *The way of a fool is right in his own eyes; but he that is wiſe hearkeneth unto counſels* ¶. *He that truſteth in his own heart*, that is, in his own mind and conduct, *is a fool: but he that walketh wiſely, he ſhall be ſaved* ‖. *Hear counſel, and receive inſtruction that thou mayſt be wiſe in thy latter end* **. *He that loveth correction, loveth knowledge: but he that hateth reproof is fooliſh* ††. *A corrupt man loveth not one that reproveth him: nor will he go to the wiſe* ‡‡. *He that rejecteth inſtruction, deſpiſeth his own ſoul: but he that yieldeth to reproof poſſeſſeth underſtanding* §§. *The wicked man impudently hardeneth his face: but he that is righteous, correcteth his way* ¶¶. *A hard heart ſhall fare evil at the laſt* ‖‖. *He that hateth reproof ſhall die* ***.

Above all, take notice what it ſays in the 29th chapter of the *Proverbs*. *The man, that with a ſtiff neck deſpiſeth him that reproveth him, ſhall ſuddenly be deſtroyed: and health ſhall not follow him* †††. What can be ſaid more ſtrong to ſhew the greatneſs of this evil, and raiſe in us an apprehenſion of the heinouſneſs of it.

Wherefore, *Theotime*, guard againſt this vice, as one of the greateſt obſtacles to your ſalvation; own it, if this be your misfortune, and uſe all poſſible endeavours to rid yourſelf of it, and

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* Wiſd. iii. 11. † Prov. x. 8. ‡ Prov. xxvii. 21. § Prov. xxvi. 12. ¶ Prov. xii. 15. ‖ Prov. xxviii. 26. ** Prov. xix. 20. †† Prov. xii. 1. ‡‡ Prov. xv. 12. §§ Prov. xv. 32. ¶¶ Prov. xxi. 29. ‖‖ Eccli. iii. 27. *** Prov. xv. 10. ††† Prov. xxix. 1.

to obtain a tractable mind, which loves to be inſtructed, counſelled, reproved, and exhorted to good. For which end

1. Beg daily of God this ſpirit, and with earneſtneſs as a thing of the greateſt conſequence, and on which your all depends.

2. Keep always in your mind that excellent advice of *Solomon*: *My Son hear me, and depart not from the words of my mouth, leſt thou mourn at the laſt, and ſay: why have I hated inſtruction, and my heart conſented not to reproof, and have not heard the voice of them that taught me, and have not inclined my ear to my maſters* *? But alas, *Theotime*, it will be too late to lament the evil when it happens, and when there will be no remedy.

*A moſt important advice for young perſons.*

3. Perſuade yourſelf that you are in an age full of ignorance, ſubject to many failings, wherein you are not able to conduct yourſelf, but that you neceſſarily ſtand in need of the direction of others, who can inſtruct, counſel, reprehend, and admoniſh you. During youth, tractableneſs and ſubmiſſion to the inſtruction of others is ſo neceſſary, that on this virtue depends your good education, your advancement in virtue, your happineſs in this life, and your eternal ſalvation in the next.

4. Love to be inſtructed in virtue and piety by whomſoever you can. Aſk counſel freely, even in thoſe things wherein you think you have ſufficient underſtanding. What an excellent maxim, to do all things with advice! *My ſon, do thou nothing without counſel, and thou ſhalt not repent when thou haſt done* †.

Be not offended when you are reproved for your faults. "It "is a great ſin (ſays St. *Jerom* ‡) to hate him who reprehends "you, principally if the correction proceeds from the love he "bears you." Defend not yourſelf with obſtinacy, which is a ſign of great pride; but on the contrary, humbly receive a reproof, acknowldge your fault, and endeavour to amend.

5. Remember, that tractableneſs does not only conſiſt in willingly receiving inſtruction, counſel, reprehenſion, and exhortation, but alſo in advantaging yourſelf by them, and putting them in practice.

Let me give you that excellent ſaying of St. *Jerome*; "It is "good to obey your elders, and to follow the orders of ſuperiors; "and, after the rules of ſcripture, learn from others the path of "life

* Prov. v. 7, 11, 12, 13. † Eccli. xxxii. 24. ‡ Cap. 5. Amos.

"life which you ought to follow, and make not use of a very bad "master, viz. your own presumption*."

## CHAP. IV.

### *The fourth obstacle, inconstancy.*

IF untractableness be very common among young people, inconstancy in good is yet more frequent, and a very great impediment to their salvation. Some youth are found tractable and easy in receiving instruction, counsel, and admonition, and those who are not so, are often cured of their untractableness by proper methods of lenity or severity. But it is likewise certain that young persons are not always steady in practising what they are taught. They have a spirit subject to change, which adheres to all sorts of objects, lets itself be carried away by all its first motions, and agitated by different passions, which permit it not to continue long in the same state. They are scarce able to make one firm resolution, especially as to what concerns virtue, much less put it in practice when made; the very first temptation causes them to yield, and to forget all their good purposes.

If inconstancy be not corrected in good time, it proves a great obstacle to the salvation of young people, and absolutely hinders them from advancing in virtue. A plant cannot take root in a quick sand, nor virtue in a light mind, which changes upon all occasions.

Wherefore the wise man says, *Winnow not with every wind, and go not into every way; be stedfast in the way of the Lord*†.

This inconstancy principally arises

*Three causes of inconstancy.*

1. From a levity natural to that age, which renders young persons inconstant in all their actions. They are changeable in all their inclinations, thoughts, designs, and resolutions, and of course, inconstant also in good.

2. From their not being thoroughly convinced of the importance of their salvation, and of the necessity they are under of dedicating themselves to virtue in their youth.

3. From a want of conduct, and not taking the counsel of others for ordering their life; or if so, from again presently following



* Hier. Epist. ad Demetriadem de virg. servanda. † Eccli. v. 11, 12.

lowing the ſudden impulſe of their fickle mind, in oppoſition to theſe three cauſes.

Endeavour firſt to correct in yourſelf, as much as you can, that natural levity of your age, which makes you ſubject to change in moſt of your actions. Be ſteady in all that you perform; change not eaſily your reſolutions, your enterpriſes, nor your employments, except with reaſon and counſel: in a word, govern yourſelf by reaſon, and not by fancy and caprice.

Secondly, Study to ſettle your mind in piety by good thoughts, and frequent reflections on your ſalvation, and on the neceſſity you are under of living virtuouſly in your youth.

*An important advice.*

Thirdly, Submit yourſelf to the conduct of a prudent confeſſor; follow his counſels, and the rule of life he ſhall preſcribe; give him an account of your actions from time to time, that he may ſet you in a good way when you are out of it; perform nothing, of how little conſequence ſoever, without his counſel, or that of ſome other prudent perſon.

But above all, beg of God frequently that he will beſtow upon you a mind ſteady to good reſolutions, and eſtabliſh you in piety by the help of his grace. *Perfect thou, (O Lord) my goings*, that is, my actions, *in thy paths: that my footſteps be not moved**. Have often before your eyes that excellent ſentence of the wiſe man; *A holy man continueth in wiſdom like the ſun*, which never loſes his light, *but a fool*, that is, a ſinner, *is changed as the moon*, which is not conſtantly in the ſame ſtate†. See, *Theotime*, which of the two ranks you chuſe; you would not be thought a fool by men, and yet you are certainly ſuch in regard to God, if you waver in his ſervice.

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## CHAP. V.

*The fifth obſtacle, the ſhame of doing good.*

AMONG the means the Devil has invented to pervert ſouls, there is none which he makes a greater advantage of than the ſhame of doing good; a ſhame by which he deplorably ſeduces weak minds, and chiefly youth; who being more apt to receive the impreſſions of fear and ſhame, give that malicious ſpirit an opportunity

* Pſalm xvi. 5. † Eccli. xxvii. 12.

tunity of abuſing their facility, in order to make them conceive that ſhame for virtue, which they ſhould only have for ſin.

*The means the devil uſes to raiſe ſhame in young perſons.*

To effect this he puts into their mind theſe falſe and vain imaginations; that virtue is contemned among men, that they are little eſteemed who follow it, that if they ſhould apply themſelves to virtue they will be deſpiſed, expoſed to the cenſures of obloquy, and mocked at. He actually draws on them the contempt and ſcoffs of others; and by theſe artifices he withholds them from the way of virtue, ſtopping and ſtifling in them, by this fooliſh ſhame, all the good thoughts and deſires they had conceived concerning their ſalvation. And ſometimes this unhappy ſhame, gains ſuch influence over their minds, that they not only bluſh to do good and appear virtuous, but even glory in their vices, and feel a certain confuſion not to be as wicked as the moſt vicious; it happened thus to St. *Auguſtin*, who deplored this his misfortune and blindneſs *.

If this pernicious ſhame has taken poſſeſſion of your mind, you muſt account it one of the greateſt obſtacles to ſalvation; and if you labour not in good time to overcome it, it will infallibly be your ruin. To conquer it, arm yourſelf with theſe reflections:

*Remedy.*

1. Why do you bluſh? Are you aſhamed of virtue, and the ſervice of God, than which there is nothing more honourable in the world? You eſteem it a glory to ſerve a prince upon earth, and will you bluſh at the ſervice of the king of heaven, your ſovereign Lord, to whom you owe all that you are? What an abſurdity! one never bluſhes, except it be for ſomething either wicked or indecent, or too baſe or unworthy of one's ſelf: ſo that if you be aſhamed of virtue, you muſt rank it among theſe, than which nothing can be more prepoſterous.

2. Before whom do you bluſh? Before the wicked, whoſe judgment is entirely perverted, thinking That to be evil which is good, and That good which is evil, and having no other rule for their opinion than their depraved inclinations. If they deſpiſe you, it is becauſe they hate virtue, and thoſe who follow it. *The worſhip of God is an abomination to a ſinner*, ſays the wiſe man †. *Fools hate them that flee from vice* ‡. *He that walketh in the right way,*



* L. 2, confeſſ. c. 3. † Eccli. i. 32. ‡ Prov. xiii. 19.

*way, and feareth God, is deſpiſed by him that goeth by an infamous way* *. If you are fond of the eſteem of men, why ſeek you not the eſteem of the wiſe and virtuous, who reſpect and honour you when you do well.

3. Call to mind that dreadful threat which the Son of God denounces againſt all thoſe who bluſh at his ſervice; *Whoſoever ſhall be aſhamed of me, and of my words, of him ſhall the Son of Man be aſhamed, when he ſhall come in his glory;* that is, he will not acknowledge him for his†. Remember that dreadful confuſion, which at the day of judgment will cover the face of thoſe who have bluſhed in this life at the ſervice of God, when their ſins ſhall be expoſed to the view of the whole world; and on account of the ſhame they had for virtue, they ſhall be abandoned to eternal diſgrace and confuſion, which ſhall never be blotted out of the memory of the angels and ſaints. *I will bring an everlaſting reproach upon you, and a perpetual ſhame, which ſhall never be forgotten*‡.

*Practice.* Beg frequently of God, that he would ſtrengthen your mind againſt this misfortune, which is nothing but the pure imagination of a weak ſpirit. Accuſtom yourſelf betimes to perform good works, without regarding what others ſpeak or think. Deſpiſe their contempts, and ſlight their ſcoffs, and reflect what great folly it is to prefer the eſteem of men before your eternal ſalvation; and to pleaſe a ſmall number of abandoned wretches at the expence of meeting the diſpleaſure of all wiſe perſons, of all the ſaints in heaven, and of God himſelf. Weigh well this reflection.

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## CHAP. VI.

### *The ſixth obſtacle, wicked company.*

### ARTICLE I.

#### *How hurtful it is.*

HOW ſhould I rejoice, *Theotime*, if I had eloquence enough to make you, and all thoſe of your age, underſtand the greatneſs of this impediment to ſalvation, and to ſet clearly before your eyes the multitude of young people, who are daily ruined by wicked company!

It

* Prov. xiv. 2. Luke ix. 26. Jer. xxiii. 40.

It is in bad company where the Devil usually sets his snares for youth; those whom he could not destroy either by the want of instruction, or the indulgence of parents, by the untractableness of their minds, or by inconstancy, or a shame of doing well, he perverts by drawing them into ill company. Their discourse, their example, and wicked conversation, serve him as instruments to corrupt the most holy, and subvert the state of a good conscience; and frequently by one of these means he has caused great disorders in souls almost ignorant of sin, and hitherto virtuous amidst the most dangerous occasions.

*A snare of the Devil for young people.*

It is surprising that this malignant spirit should find no instruments more powerful to destroy men, than men themselves? that they should be servants and ministers to execute against their own brethren the malice he has conceived against them, and the execrable design he has laid to involve them with himself in eternal damnation? I know not whether we should most deplore, those who contribute by their discourse or example to the ruin of their brethren, or those who suffer themselves to be perverted for want of flying and avoiding such company, more than persons infected with the plague.

Concerning the first, must not they be highly wicked to destroy by their conversation those for whom *Jesus Christ* has died*? as if it were not sufficient to damn themselves†; but also to be the cause of the damnation of their brethren; to be the authors of their corruption, and of an infinite number of sins which they commit; to be the instruments of the malice of the Devil, and perform themselves the office of that detestable fiend, which is to draw men into sin, and precipitate them into hell. Wretched *Cains*, you must answer for the souls of your brethren; the voice of their blood which you have spilt, that is, of their salvation which you have lost, cries to God for vengeance against you; he will demand it at your hands, you must render him an account of it, soul for soul. *Wo*, says the son of God, *to that man by whom the scandal cometh*‡; that is, who draws others into sin.

As for the others, are not they as much to be deplored, who permit themselves thus unfortunately to be perverted by the conversation of the wicked? which often befalls them after they have been well fore-warned, that there is nothing more dangerous for youth than wicked company, and that it is the rock where many are

* Rom. xiv. 15. † 2 Tim. iii. 13. ‡ Matt. xviii. 7.

are irreparably ſhipwrecked; frequently even after they had learnt it by experience to the great hazard of their ſalvation. After all this, what a deplorable blindneſs it muſt be not to avoid theſe precipices, but to go wilfully without fear into ſuch company, which they ought to ſhun more than death itſelf.

Beware of ſo great an impediment to ſalvation, which you riſk for want of this precaution. Hearken to the prophets, who cry out to all thoſe who deſire to be ſaved; *Depart, depart, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing**. *Flee ye from the midſt of Babylon, and let every one ſave his own life* †.

Give ear to the wiſe man, who exhorts you with a fatherly affection; *My ſon, if ſinners ſhall entice thee, conſent not to them. If they ſhall ſay: Come with us,* &c. *My ſon, walk not thou with them, reſtrain thy foot from their paths. For their feet run to evil, and make haſte to ſhed blood* ‡. *Be not delighted in the paths of the wicked, neither let the way of evil men pleaſe thee. Flee from it, paſs not by it: go aſide, and forſake it*§.

## ARTICLE II.

*Two things pernicious in wicked company, diſcourſe and example.*

THERE are two things in the converſation of the wicked, which you muſt ſtand in dread of, their diſcourſe and example.

As to diſcourſe, St. *Paul* the apoſtle cries out aloud to all, *Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners*¶. *Shun,* (ſays he to *Timothy*) *profane and vain babblings: for they grow much towards ungodlineſs*‖. St. *James* ſays, that *the tongue is a fire, which ſetteth on fire the wheel of our nativity, being ſet on fire by hell***. *David* ſays, that the *throat* of ſinners *is an open ſepulchre,* from whence iſſue noiſome ſtenches to infect ſouls ††. That *they have ſharpened their tongues like a ſerpent:* and *the venom of aſps is under their lips* ‡‡, by which they envenom thoſe who give attention to them.

Though vicious perſons may ſometimes forbear their wicked diſcourſe, yet their example never fails to make ſtrong impreſſions. *He that toucheth pitch,* ſays the wiſe man, *ſhall be defiled with it: and he that hath fellowſhip with the proud, ſhall put on pride*§§. *Be not a friend to an angry man, and do not walk with a furious man: leſt perhaps thou learn his ways*¶¶. *He that walketh with the wiſe, ſhall*

* Iſa. lii. 11. † Jer. li. 6. ‡ Prov. i. 10, 11, 15, 16. § Prov. iv. 14, 15. ¶ 1 Cor. xv. 33. ‖ 2 Tim. ii. 16. ** Jam. iii. 6. †† Pſ. v. 11. ‡‡ Pſ. cxxxix. §§ Eccli. xiii. 1. ¶¶ Prov. xxii. 24, 25.

*ſhall be wiſe: a friend of fools*, that is of ſinners, *ſhall become like to them* *. Example has an incredible influence over the minds of youth towards evil. The friendſhip that is contracted with the wicked leads to condeſcenſion, which ſtrongly inclines to imitation. "O friendſhip, what an enemy art thou (ſays St. *Auguſtine*) to the "good of ſouls! O blindneſs of mind, which cauſed us to commit "ſin only by imitation, and to pleaſe others. When they ſaid, "Come let us do ſome bad action, we were aſhamed not to "comply †."

That you may be convinced of the depth of vice into which evil company may bring young men, hearken to what the ſame ſaint reports of himſelf, deploring the unhappy ſtate to which he was reduced by that means. "I "ſo blindly plunged myſelf into vice," ſays he, "that amongſt "thoſe of my age I bluſhed not to be as wicked as they, when I "heard them glory in their ſins, and boaſt in proportion to their "degree of guilt. I committed ſin not only for the pleaſure of "the deed, but from a deſire of praiſe. What is there in the "world but vice which deſerves to be blamed? Yet I was ſo de-"praved, that I ſought to become more vicious, leſt I ſhould be "blamed: And when I could not equal the moſt impious of my "companions in wickedneſs, I feigned ſins which I never com-"mitted, leſt I ſhould be accounted more contemptible, as I was "more innocent, and leſt I ſhould be eſteemed leſs infamous, as "I appeared more chaſte. See with what ſort of companions I "converſed, when I walked in the wretched path of *Babylon*, that "is, in the wicked part of my youth, in the ſtinking dirt wherein "I wallowed, as if I had rolled myſelf in precious odours and "ſweet perfumes ‡."

*A remarkable inſtance of the effects of bad company.*

This was the deplorable ſtate to which wicked company brought St. *Auguſtine* in his youth; a ſtate out of which he could not be drawn but with the greateſt difficulty, and by a particular miracle of divine grace, as we have ſhewn above. Part I. Chap. 12.

## ARTICLE III.

*Of four ſorts of wicked companions which muſt be avoided.*

FIRST, *Theotime*, abhor the company of thoſe who make open profeſſion of vice, *Libertines.*

25

* Prov. xiii. 20. † S. Aug. lib. confeſſ. 9. ‡ Lib. 2. confeſ. cap. 3.

as impious persons and libertines; and of all those who seek not to conceal the greatest vices, as impurity, swearing, drunkenness, but glory in them. *They who are glad*, says the wise man, *when they have done evil, and rejoice in most wicked things**.

*Lewd discourse.*

2. Fly as from a plague those who scoff at virtue, who solicit you to sin, or who entertain you with lewd discourse, although themselves appear not openly vicious. Wicked discourse is always prejudicial, from whence soever it comes; it constantly produces the same effect, which is to introduce sin into the soul of him who willingly gives ear to it.

*Dissemblers.*

3. Avoid the company of others who dissemble more, yet are not less dangerous, who will not solicit you openly to sin, but divert you from the exercise of virtue, as from prayer, from frequenting the sacraments, from reading good books; who tell you those things are neither convenient nor necessary for you; that they are not proper for you at this time, that you have something else to do; and instead of these entertain you only with vain discourse of pleasures and pastimes, of the hopes of the world, of vanity and pomp, &c. This conversation, *Theotime*, is very hurtful, although it may not appear so: for it saps the foundation of virtue, and imperceptibly destroys it.

*Idle young persons.*

Fly the company of idle and slothful young people, who have no employment, or comply very ill with that wherein they are engaged: otherwise by their discourse and example they will persuade you to leave your employment and work, to pass your time in merriment; they will teach you to love play, to haunt public houses, to frequent balls and comedies; and from this idle life they will draw you into vice. Observe well this advice, and be assured, that there are no companions more dangerous than these.

Remember that sooner or later the divine vengeance will overtake the wicked, either visibly or invisibly. *In the congregation of sinners*, says the wise man, *a fire shall be kindled, and in an unbelieving nation wrath shall flame out* †. If you be found amongst them, you will be involved in their ruin. *The way of sinners is made plain with stones, and in their end is hell, and darkness, and pains* ‡. For this reason I say to you with the prophet, *Depart from the tents of these*

* Prov. ii. 14. † Eccli. xvi. 7, ‡ Eccli. xxi. 11.

*these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest you be involved in their sins* *. Woe be to him, who being forewarned, avoids not this precipice and eternal misfortune.

Read hereafter Chap. 8. Art. 3. the history of a young man, who, being perverted by wicked company, died in despair, crying out, "Woe be to him that seduced me."

## CHAP. VII.

*The seventh obstacle to the salvation of youth, idleness.*

THIS, *Theotime*, is one of the greatest obstacles to salvation, and that which either causes or encreases all the precedent obstacles, besides many others. Idleness occasions ignorance and want of instruction, which cannot be attained without labour. Idleness, begets untractableness; for a slothful mind will learn nothing: the dread of taking pains, makes him esteem himself sufficiently knowing, and refuse to receive the instruction and counsel of others, to avoid the trouble of putting them in practice. *The sluggard*, says the scripture, *is wiser in his own conceit, than seven men that speak sentences* †. Idleness is the cause of inconstancy; *the sluggard willeth and willeth not* ‡. To day he desires one thing, to morrow another; to day he will be good, to morrow he changes his resolution. Idleness causes a shame of doing well, and cools that courage which is necessary in the pursuit of virtue. *Fear casteth down the slothful* §. It produces those evil inclinations, which spring up in our souls more abundantly than ill weeds in a fertile soil, which the gardener neglects to cultivate. Idleness puts us in pursuit, and in the way of bad company and dangerous amusements. Idleness is commonly the mother of that fatal vice of impurity. It accustoms us to many disorders, and frequently puts us in the occasion of sin. Moreover, it disqualifies youth for the state of life, in which they are to be hereafter engaged.

In a word, it is, "The sink of all temptations and wicked thoughts, "(says St. *Bernard*) the mother of follies and step-mother of vir-"tues, the death of the soul, the sepulchre of a living man, the "receptacle of all evil. *Idleness has taught much evil* ¶."

Ought

* Num. xvi. 26. † Prov. xxvi. 16. ‡ Prov. xiii. 4. § Prov. xviii. 8. ¶ Eccli. xxxiii. 29.

*How common amongſt young perſons.*

Ought we not to be ſtruck with dread to ſee this ſin, which is the cauſe of ſo many evils, yet ſo common among youth, that it ſeems natural to them? The greateſt part lead an idle and indolent life, flying labour as death itſelf, applying themſelves to nothing ſerious; or if they undertake any thing, they preſently abandon it, or at beſt acquit themſelves very ill of it. They are fond of nothing but pleaſure and diverſions. Play, parties of pleaſure, good chear, ſleeping, are the chief employments of their life, and their moſt ſerious occupations.

This evil has in ſuch a manner taken poſſeſſion of their hearts, that they will not ſo much as know it, for fear of being obliged to forſake it. *How long wilt thou ſleep, O ſluggard?* ſays the wiſe man, *When wilt thou riſe out of thy ſleep*, of idleneſs which has made thee ſo drowſy? *Want ſhall come upon thee, as a traveller, and poverty as a man armed* *. Open your heart, dear *Theotime*, to the voice of the Holy Ghoſt, in order to baniſh idleneſs from thence, or hinder it from ever coming there. For this end fortify your mind againſt this vice by the following reflections.

*The remedy.*

*All men are obliged to labour.*

1. Conſider that all men are born to labour, God has condemned them thereto by a ſolemn ſentence which he pronounced at the beginning of the world. *In the ſweat of thy face ſhalt thou eat bread, till thou return to the earth, out of which thou waſt taken* †. If then you would be exempt and lead an idle life, you reſiſt the will of God, and break through the order he has ſo ſolemnly eſtabliſhed. What reaſon can you alledge for exempting yourſelf from ſo juſt and general a law, from which none were ever diſpenſed? and if you are not, upon what pretext can you perſiſt in an idle life?

2. If men be obliged to labour all their life-time, they have yet a ſtricter obligation to it during their youth, becauſe if that age be not exerciſed in virtuous undertakings, it contracts many vices and wicked habits, which continue all the reſt of their life. Becauſe youth is the proper time to cultivate the mind, and form it to good, and wherein alone they may render themſelves capable of any future employment. Time loſt in any age never returns; but there is this difference, that time loſt in other ages, may ſometimes be repaired; but time loſt in youth is irreparable.

*Chiefly young men.*

3. Con-

* Prov. vi. 9, 11. † Gen. iii. 19.

3. Conſider attentively the grief you will one day feel, for loſing the time of your youth, when you ſhall find yourſelf unfit for employments, and incapable of any good, as it happens to many: you believe it not at preſent, but one day you will be ſenſible of it, when it is too late. *The ſorrow for the loſs of time in youth.*

4. If this grief at preſent move you not, the rigorous account you ſhall give to God of the ill-ſpent time of your youth at his judgment, ought to make you tremble. In that dreadful judgment all your life ſhall be ſet before your eyes in order, one part after another; and the firſt article of the account, which ſhall be examined, will be that of the employment you have followed in your youth: What will you anſwer to this queſtion? There you will diſtinctly diſcover all the diſorders which have ſprung from that firſt fault; the ignorance it has cauſed in you, the ſins it has made you commit, the vices wherein you have been involved, all the good you have been rendered incapable of. What have you to anſwer to all theſe things? And if you cannot juſtify yourſelf, what muſt be the conſequence? *The account that muſt be given.*

6. How many others are there now in hell, who acknowledge the origin of their damnation to ariſe from the ill ſpending of the time of their youth? If they could but hope for one moment of time, which you have now in your power, what would they not do to obtain it, and ſpend it to advantage? Is it poſſible that their miſery does not move you, and that you will not grow wiſe at other men's expence, learning, by their example, to avoid that eternal miſery into which their idleneſs has thrown them. *Many damned for the ill ſpending of their youth.*

In order to avoid idleneſs, remember to perform two things. The firſt is, to apply yourſelf to ſome commendable exerciſe, which may keep you employed the time of your youth; there is no ſtate of life but has ſome employment annext to it, even by the order of juſtice. The ſecond is, to take care as much as you can never to be idle. Be ever employed either in your buſineſs, reading, or recreation. Let your recreations be accompanied with action either of body or mind. The Devil ſeeks no better opportunity than to find you idle, that he may tempt and ſurprize you. For this reaſon practiſe diligently that *Two things to be done againſt idleneſs.*

that excellent advice of St. *Jerome*, "Be always doing something, "that the Devil may aways find you employed *."

## CHAP. VIII.

*The eighth obſtacle, impurity.*

WE are now come to the greateſt, moſt powerful, and moſt univerſal of all the obſtacles to the ſalvation of youth, *viz.* the ſin of impurity. At the ſight of which I cannot refrain from that expreſſion of the prophet *Jeremy: Who will give water to my head, and a fountain of tears to my eyes? and I will weep day and night for the ſlain of the daughter of my people*†. For who can attentively conſider the infinite number of young people which this ſin keeps miſerably enſlaved, the havock it makes in their ſouls, the innumerable offences it cauſes them to commit, the diſorder it brings, the misfortunes into which it daily precipitates them, and above all the height of miſery, *viz.* the ruin of their ſoul, and eternal damnation: who can conſider theſe things, I ſay, without having his heart pierced with ſorrow, and without being moved with compaſſion, ſo far as to warn them of the danger, and aſſiſt in withdrawing them from the misfortune into which they blindly run? For this reaſon, read attentively the following important reflections.

### ARTICLE I.

*That the ſin of impurity is the greateſt enemy to youth, and damns more than all other vices together.*

I Wiſh this aſſertion were rather a dream than truth, and that there were as much reaſon to queſtion it, as to hold it infallible: but it is made too clear and viſible by daily experience, which evidently diſcovers two things. 1. That a great part of youth is unhappily addicted to this ſin. 2. That among thoſe, who are inclined to it, there are many who are not ſubject to any other ſin.

We daily ſee the moſt innocent age of life corrupted by that infamous ſin, and the moſt flouriſhing portion of God's church diſhonoured by that deteſtable vice? They are no ſooner capable of reaſon, than this vice attacks them; it creeps into their minds, it gains their affections, it takes up their thoughts, it inflames their hearts with a love of diſhoneſt pleaſures, which daily encreaſing

* Hier. Epiſt. ad Ruſt. † Jer. ix. 1.

fing with age, becomes fo ſtrong, that it is almoſt impoſſible to extinguiſh it.

This ariſes partly from the corruption of nature, which*, is inclined to evil from its youth; partly from the temper and conſtitution of that age, which the tenderneſs of the body, and heat of blood, render more ſuſceptible of the impreſſion of ſenſual pleaſures, whence *Ariſtotle* calls it the vice of youth; and partly alſo from the malice of the Devil, which aſſaults man in his youth on the weakeſt ſide, making uſe of the frailty of the fleſh to overcome the ſpirit; and as St. *Jerome*† judiciouſly obſerves, "takes advantage "of the heat of youth, by which he raiſes in their heart the fire "of unchaſte love, enkindling in them a more burning and de- "ſtructive furnace than that which the king of *Babylon* cauſed to "be prepared for the three innocent children of *Iſrael*, becauſe "that could but conſume their bodies, but this inflames their ſouls, "and prepares them for another fire which ſhall never be con- "ſumed."

*Three cauſes of impurity.*

They who attentively conſider the depravity of morals uſually reigning amongſt youth, can never be ſufficiently grieved. But what deſerves moſt our tears, is, that this ſin is often the ſole cauſe of this corruption, as there are many who are not ſubject to any other enormous ſin; or if they be, they are the effects of this; ſo that if they were freed from this, they would lead a pure and irreproachable life: whereas, permitting themſelves to be overcome by this unclean paſſion, they lead a life full of iniquity, and daily encreaſing the number of their ſins, and vicious habits, caſt themſelves into ſo deplorable a ſtate, as to loſe all hopes of amendment and ſalvation. Wretched ſin! muſt thou thus deſtroy men when they firſt enter the way of ſalvation? muſt thou forcibly take away from God ſo many fair ſouls, which without thee would live in innocence, to ſacrifice them to pleaſures, and by pleaſures to the Devil and everlaſting flames? Curſed incontinence! who is there that can hate thee as thou deſerveſt? To apprehend it more clearly, *Theotime*, read attentively that which follows, and judge of the cauſe by its effects.

I AR-

* Gen. viii. 21. † Epiſt. ad Demetriad.

## ARTICLE II.

*Of the ſad effects of the ſin of impurity.*

THE author of the book of the gift of chaſtity *, attributed to St. *Cyprian*, deſcribes briefly a great number of the horrible effects of this ſin: he ſays, that "immodeſty is a deteſtable "paſſion, which ſpares neither ſouls nor bodies, which renders "men abſolutely ſlaves to diſhoneſt love, flattering them at the "beginning, that it may more effectually deſtroy them. When "it hath gotten poſſeſſion of their hearts, it drains their ſubſtance "together with their modeſty; it raiſes the paſſions even to an "extreme height, it deſtroys a good conſcience, it is the mother "of impenitence, the loſs and ruin of the beſt part of life," that is, of youth.

Omitting the damage that ſin cauſes to the body, honour and eſtate, I ſhall inſiſt only upon the dreadful effects it produces in the ſoul, which I reduce to five or ſix.

*Firſt effect, the loſs of the fear of God.*

The firſt is, the loſs of the fear of God, which it cauſes in the ſoul, together with the ruin of every good inclination. Experience ſhews this ſo plainly, that we need not ſeek any other proof. We ſee many young people well educated, who have very good inclinations in their youth, an averſion from evil, a great affection to piety, the fear of God ſtrongly imprinted in their ſouls: now all theſe good qualities remain, if the ſin of impurity does not take poſſeſſion of their hearts; but when that has once entered into their mind, it entirely ſubverts them. It creeps in firſt by immodeſt thoughts, the thoughts produce the deſire of wanton pleaſures, the deſire moves to unchaſte actions, theſe ſins repeated and multiplied, ruin all the good inclinations; things now appear far otherwiſe than before, the ſin now ſeems no more ſo great, it becomes more familiar to them; and ſuch an one who before had a great apprehenſion of one mortal ſin, when he is once overcome by this brutal paſſion, is not diſmayed to commit them by hundreds and thouſands. What a change! what a ſubverſion is this of conſcience!

*Second effect, a diſreliſh of virtue.*

The ſecond effect of this ſin is a diſlike, and even an averſion to virtue, and to all piety and goodneſs. It is not to be conceived how thoſe who are infected with this vice, have an averſion

* De bono pudicitiæ.

averſion to what regards their ſalvation. Prayer is tedious, the ſacraments contemptible, the word of God moves them not, reading of pious books is inſupportable. This is but too manifeſt by experience, and no wonder, *Theotime*; he who is diſtempered with a fever, takes no delight in the moſt delicious meats; on the contrary, they ſeem to him bitter, becauſe his taſte is depraved with ſome bitter quality. Thus he who is once ſeized with this burning fever of impurity, finds a ſtrange loathing and diſlike of all the moſt pious and religious things, by having his heart infected with carnal and impure affections, which permit him not to reliſh the ſweetneſs of holy things. *The ſenſual man*, ſays S. *Paul*, that is, he who follows the motions of the animal or ſenſual part, *perceiveth not the things that are of the ſpirit of God* *. And, *They that are according to the fleſh, mind the things that are of the fleſh* †.

The third effect is a blindneſs of mind, which this ſin produces in the ſoul, which hinders her from diſcerning good from bad, and judging of things as ſhe ought. It is impoſſible that a perſon once poſſeſſed by that paſſion, ſhould not have his judgment perverted, and eſteem the things of ſalvation otherwiſe than he ſhould: his attachment and inclination to this ſin, makes him not account it ſo great an evil (for we ordinarily judge according to our inclinations) but think that he can withdraw himſelf when he pleaſes; it hinders him from ſeeing the dreadful conſequences of this vice; it takes away the remembrance of the divine judgments, and frequently endeavours to baniſh God from his mind, that he may ſin more freely, as it is obſerved of thoſe infamous old men, who attempted to corrupt the chaſtity of *Suſanna*; *they were inflamed with luſt towards her*, ſays the ſcripture, *and they perverted their own mind and turned away their eyes that they might not look unto heaven, nor remember juſt judgments* ‡. This is the proper and peculiar effect of impurity; it blinds the mind, and makes it hoodwink itſelf, ſtifling all good thoughts, that it may ſin with a greater liberty, and with leſs remorſe of conſcience. *Third effect, blindneſs of mind.*

From this blindneſs of mind ſprings pride, the fourth effect of this ſin of impurity, which hindering the mind from knowing its own good, makes it deſpiſe all admonitions, reſiſt all remonſtrances, and ſcoff at the moſt wholſome counſels. So that as this ſin renders *Fourth effect, pride.*



* 1 Cor. ii. 14. † Rom. viii. 5. ‡ Dan. xiii. 8, 9.

ders youth soft and pliable to vice, it makes them deaf to advice concerning their salvation. The wise man teaches you this truth which experience has sufficiently confirmed. *A man of sense*, says he, *will praise every wise word he shall hear, and will apply it to himself: the luxurious man hath heard it, and it shall displease him, and he will cast it behind his back* *. We need no other example of this truth, than that of St. *Augustine*, in the second book of his confessions †, where he deplores the insupportable pride, with which he contemned the discreet admonitions of his pious mother, to whom next to God he owed his salvation.

*Fifth effect, obstinacy in sin.*

The fifth effect is an obdurateness of the will in wickedness. In proportion as sin multiplies, the soul habituates herself, and becomes obdurate, so that nothing is able to soften her. It would be incredible, if we did not daily evidently see it, how much those who are given to this sin, become void of sense or apprehension. They are found insensible of all good admonitions, deaf to all the inspirations of grace; the menaces of divine justice and chastisements seem to them but a dream; witness *Lot*'s two sons-in-law, *to whom he seemed to speak as it were in jest, when he pressed them* ‡, to depart from the city of *Sodom*, which the night following should be destroyed, as in effect it was, and they together with it. The examples of those whom God has so rigorously punished for this sin have no effect upon them; the misfortunes which they see with their own eyes befalling others, make no impression on their minds; nothing is able to move them, so fatally has this brutal passion blinded them.

*Sixth means, final impenitence.*

After all these sad effects of the sin of immodesty, there remains one which fills up the measure of all the former, and to which they all tend, *viz.* final impenitence or spiritual death, which is the height of all misfortunes. It is, the too common effect of this detestable sin, which incessantly fills hell with innumerable souls by the untimely deaths it brings on those who are plunged into this vice: some being surprized by a sickness, which deprives them of the time or means of doing penance; others by some frightful accident; others dying in obdurateness, abandoned by God at the hour of death, as they abandoned him during their lives. *The Lord*, says S. *Peter*, *knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation; but to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment*

* Eccli. xxi. 18. † Chap. III. ‡ Gen. xix. 14.

*ment to be tormented* with that fire which his juſtice has prepared for them; (hearken what follows) *and eſpecially them who walk after the fleſh in the luſt of uncleanneſs.* But what will befall them? *Theſe men, as irrational beaſts, ſhall periſh receiving the reward of injuſtice**. Dear *Theotime*, is it poſſible that this oracle, pronounced by the Holy Ghoſt himſelf againſt immodeſty ſhould not ſtrike you with an horror of that deteſtable ſin? Read it attentively, and preſerve it in your memory; and that it may be more ſtrongly ſettled in your mind, add to it the following examples.

## ARTICLE III.

*Examples of the miſerable death of thoſe who were addicted to the ſin of impurity.*

THE ſacred ſcripture furniſhes a great number of them; we have already mentioned ſome in Part I. Chap. 6. See what we have there related of the two ſons of the patriarch *Juda*, who were puniſhed by God with ſudden death for the ſins they committed by deteſtable actions of impurity.

The miſerable death of the two ſons of the high prieſt *Heli*, and all the other misfortunes which God inflicted upon that family, were not only puniſhments of their irreverence and injuſtice in the temple, but alſo of their impurity, as it is obſerved in the firſt book of *Kings* †.

*Amnon* the ſon of *David*, found the chaſtiſement of his inceſtuous pleaſures, in the dreadful death he received from the treacherous hands of his own brother *Abſolom*.

The rebellion of *Abſolom* againſt his father, was not the ſole cauſe for which God laid his avenging hand upon him; the uncleanneſſes he had committed, mentioned in the ſecond book of *Kings*‡, with his other crimes, contributed thereto.

What ſhall we ſay of *Solomon*, who being the wiſeſt of men, ſingularly beloved by God, and viſited with all deſirable graces, but permitting himſelf to be unfortunately carried away with unchaſte love, fell from that ſin to the greateſt of all crimes, that is, idolatry; wherein he continued ſo long, that it is not known whether he ever abandoned it, and has left the world in doubt of his ſalvation? Dreadful example! Frightful effect of the ſin of uncleanneſs!



* 2 Pet. ii. 9, 10, 12, 13. † Chap. ii. 22. ‡ Chap. xvi.

If this ſin has been ſo fatal to individuals, it has not ſpared multitudes, nor even the whole world.

That dreadful deluge, which drowned the whole earth ſixteen hundred years after its creation, was the firſt effect of impurity, which had cauſed ſo prodigious a corruption in all human nature, that it provoked the divine wrath, even to deſtroy by an univerſal flood that ſame nature, the moſt excellent workmanſhip of his hands; to extinguiſh in thoſe waters the flames of that unchaſte love, which had ſpread itſelf over the earth.

The waters of the deluge were ſcarce dried up, when this deteſtable ſin beginning again to rekindle its firſt flames, obliged the divine juſtice to ſend another frightful puniſhment upon thoſe infamous cities of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*; whoſe impurities being arrived at the greateſt height, and crying to heaven for vengeance, God ſhowered down in a conſpicuous manner fire and brimſtone, which reduced to aſhes, not only the men and cities, but alſo all the neighbouring land, which is even to this day an infectious unwholſome marſh, to which no one dares to approach; that it might ſerve as an example to poſterity, and teach the lewd, that the impure fire with which they permit themſelves to be inflamed, ſhall be puniſhed with another fire, which ſhall always burn and never be conſumed.

To theſe examples, which are taken out of the ſacred ſcripture, I might add many others which hiſtories abundantly furniſh. I ſhall content myſelf with two, which I have choſen from among others.

The firſt is related by St. *Gregory* in his dialogues *. He ſays, there was one in his time, named *Chryſorius*, a man of quality, and very rich; yet as full of vices as he was wealthy in riches; but above all extremely addicted to immodeſt pleaſures: God reſolving to put a period to thoſe ſins he daily heaped one upon another, ſends him a ſevere ſickneſs, of which he died, but in a very extraordinary manner. Approaching to his laſt moments, he ſuddenly perceived a multitude of evil ſpirits, who preſented themſelves to him in hideous forms, and made a ſhew as if they would immediately carry him into hell. He began to tremble, look aghaſt, and mournfully cry out for help; he turns himſelf on every ſide to avoid the ſight of thoſe horrid ſhapes; but which way ſoever he moves, they are continually before his eyes. After many

* Lib. 4. Cap. 38.

many a ſtruggle, feeling himſelf ſurrounded and violently ſeized by thoſe wicked ſpirits, he began horribly to cry out, *Truce till morning, Truce till morning;* and ſhrieking thus, his ſoul was torn from his body, and he made a fatal end without obtaining the truce he required.

If this example be terrible, that which follows is yet more frightful, and ought to affect you ſtill more. It is related by *John Gerſon*, Chancellor of *Paris*, who took it out of *Thomas Catapratenſis* ſuffragan biſhop of *Cambray*, who ſays he was an eye-witneſs to it.

He ſays, that, whilſt at ſchool, he had contracted a very ſtrict friendſhip, with a fellow ſtudent, a perſon of quality, and endowed with all the virtues one could wiſh in a young man. Happy if he had preſerved that treaſure of innocence! But it chanced by a misfortune too frequent among young perſons, that he fell into wicked company, which kindled in his heart the fire of unchaſte love: this in a ſhort time baniſhed all his good inclinations, and plunged him into the depth of vice. His irregularities became public, yet he continued this kind of life, notwithſtanding the admonitions of his friends: and this author ſays, that he himſelf frequently exhorted him to return to the way from which he had departed. As he contemned all advice, God was reſolved in his perſon to ſhew an example to young people, who permit themſelves to be blindly carried away by this miſerable ſin, by the following dreadful accident. Being aſleep at midnight, he was ſeized with a terrible fright, and awaking he began to cry out in a dreadful manner. The whole houſe alarmed come to his aſſiſtance. They aſk what is his complaint, but can get no other anſwer from him than hideous outcries. They ſend for the prieſt, who exhorts him to think upon God, and beg pardon for his ſins, but in vain. The prieſt continuing to exhort him with many moving expreſſions and tears, he turns towards him, and looking upon him with ghaſtly eyes, ſpeaks thus to him in a lamentable voice; "Wo be "to him that ſeduced me, Wo be to him that ſeduced me. It is "in vain to invoke the grace of God, I ſee hell open ready to re-"ceive me."

After theſe words, which redoubled the lamentations of all preſent, every one entreating him to recommend himſelf to God, he turns to the other ſide, and continuing his clamours, miſerably dies in deſpair.

Ought not this example to make all thoſe tremble, who are addicted to the ſin of incontinency, and principally youth, who are here

chiefly concerned? to teach them how they ought to avoid the company of thoſe wretches, who corrupt the virtues of others.

## ARTICLE IV.

*The firſt remedy againſt impurity is to reſiſt this ſin at the beginning.*

AFTER having diſcovered the malice of this ſin, I muſt ſhew the remedies, and afford you means by which you may preſerve yourſelf from ſo great an enemy to your ſalvation.

The firſt is to reſiſt it betimes, and in its firſt aſſaults, before it has gotten poſſeſſion, and rendered itſelf maſter of your heart.

This, *Theotime*, is the great remedy againſt this ſin, and principally in youth, wherein it is ſo neceſſary, that for want of practiſing it, the greateſt part of young men are unhappily engaged in this vice, and oftentimes ſo deeply, that they are never able to free themſelves, at leaſt without very great difficulty.

For this reaſon the fathers have recommended it with much care, and more than any other.

" S. *Cyprian* (*de jejun.*) ſays, that we muſt reſiſt the firſt temp-
" tations of the Devil; and to do otherwiſe is to cheriſh a ſnake
" which will become a dragon, able to devour him who har-
" boured it."

S. *Jerome* * ſays, " that the Devil is a creeping ſerpent; and as
" to keep a ſerpent from entering into a hole, we hinder it from
" putting in its head, which being once entered, it cannot be ſtop-
" ped from introducing its whole body:" ſo to hinder the Devil from getting admittance into our ſoul by ſin, we muſt reſiſt the firſt temptations; which if not withſtood, he inſenſibly creeps into the heart, and makes himſelf maſter of it.

St. *Gregory* † ſays, " that impurity is enkindled in the ſoul like fire
" among ſtraw; and as if one does not quickly and entirely extin-
" guiſh the fire, it burns all it meets with: ſo if the flame of in-
" continence be not carefully put out, it cauſes a fire in the ſoul,
" which is often without remedy."

St. *Bernard* ‡ warns us to reject evil thoughts at the beginning,
" and they will fly from you: Laſcivious thoughts which are not
" reſiſted, cauſe delight, delight draws on conſent, conſent pro-
" duces the act, from the act ſprings a habit, from a habit neceſſi-
" ty, and from neceſſity death. And as the viper is killed by the
" little

* In c. 9. Eccleſ. † In c. 25. 1 Kings. ‡ De inter. domo, c. 39.

" little ones she carries in her womb; so we receive death by our " vicious thoughts, when we nourish them in our hearts."

The reason of this maxim being so much recommended by the saints, is, because it is easiest to resist the sin of impurity at the beginning, and very hard to surmount it when it is become inveterate and strengthened by a long habit.

## ARTICLE V.

*The second remedy: to avoid the causes of impurity.*

THE second remedy against the sin of immodesty is to avoid carefully the cause, and occasions of it. This remedy is absolutely necessary; it being certain, that to hinder the effect we must take away the cause; he who puts himself in the occasion of evil, cannot avoid falling into it. *He that loveth danger, shall perish in it**.

The first cause we must fly is *idleness*, the mother of all vices, but principally of this. It is idleness which opens the door to evil thoughts and immodest desires, which increase extremely in an idle mind, and occasion a vast number of sins. It is the sink and receptacle of impure temptations, according to St. *Bernard*, *Impurity* says he, " quickly ensnares those it finds idle, and burns " more violently those it finds lulled asleep in vice."

Be careful then, never to be idle, especially when you are alone.

The second cause of impurity is *intemperance* in eating and drinking, with which it is impossible to preserve chastity in whatsoever age, but principally in youth. The heat of blood which boils up in that age, excites them very much to sensual pleasures; but when it is assisted by exterior causes, as wine and good cheer it blazes out. Hearken to what St. *Jerome*† says, who speaks of it by his own experience. In his epistle to *Furia* he says, " That " mount *Ætna*, mount *Vesuvius*, and mount *Olympus*, which con- " tinually exhale fire and flames, did not burn with greater heat " than the marrow of young people, when they are inflamed with " wine and delicious meats. And in his epistle to *Eustochium*. If " I be qualified, says he, to give any counsel, if you will give cre- " dit to one that is experienced. I chiefly admonish and beseech " that soul, which desires to be the spouse of *Jesus Christ* by prefer- " ving her purity, to fly from wine as a mortal poison. These are " the first arms the Devil makes use of against youth. Wine and " youth are a double incentive to pleasure; why do we cast oil " on

* Eccli. iii. 27. † De virg. serv.

" on the fire? Why do we add more fuel to a body than is on fire?" Behold, *Theotime*, the advice of this great saint, so experienced in the conduct of souls, and chiefly of youth. Apply all your endeavours to practise it exactly, if you would preserve your chastity; and to do it well, see Part 4. Chap. 13. of sobriety.

The third cause you ought carefully to avoid is *wicked company*, and all sort of loose discourse, or such as any way tend to immodesty. It is not to be imagined how those things corrupt and destroy chastity in young people: for how many are there who never fell into this dreadful sin, till they had learned it, either by conversation with dissolute persons, or by occasion of immodest discourse, which falling upon young minds, like a spark among straw, frequently inflames them with the fire of unchaste love. This cause is so common, and so pernicious to young people, that we can never enough cry out to them. Fly wicked company, shut your ears to immodest discourse; or to use the words of the Apostle, *be not deceived, evil communications corrupt good manners* *.

The fourth cause is *familiar conversation with women*, which is also extremely dangerous. It is there, *Theotime*, the chastity of youth is utterly lost; and frequently, after it has been preserved from other dangers, it is there deplorably shipwrecked. Impure love enters but too easily into young minds; but when it is assisted by the presence of the object, it is inflamed beyond all imagination. For this reason the wise man gives us that important admonition, *Tarry not among women. For from garments cometh a moth, and from a woman the iniquity of a man* †.

Now if the company of women be very prejudicial to young people, it becomes pernicious to them, and absolutely mortal, when it passes to a familiarity, to a desire to please and be beloved, to indiscreet freedom, to caresses and demonstrations of friendship, and such like fondnesses, too common amongst young persons, which St. *Jerome* calls very well "The forerunners to the ap-"proaching ruin of chastity."

We must add to this cause immodest or too curious looks, either in or out of conversation. Love enters by the eyes; and sometimes a look, without any evil design, draws after it a vast train of sins. *Gaze not upon a maiden, lest her beauty be a stumbling block to thee. Turn away thy face from a woman dressed up, and gaze not about upon another's beauty. For many have perished by the beauty of a woman,*

* 1 Cor. xv. 33. † Eccli. xlii. 12, 13.

*man; and hereby luſt is enkindled as a fire**. What excellent advice! Yet as much unknown, as it is important. Engrave this deeply in your memory, and govern well your ſight, for if it ſhould happen to glance upon dangerous objects, at leaſt fix it not there, but withdraw it immediately. Obſerve the ſame rule with reſpect to all pictures, or immodeſt figures, which are ſo many rocks for chaſtity to ſplit upon, and wherewith the world unhappily abounds.

Add alſo to the former cauſes, *kiſſes*, which amongſt youth proceed often from ſenſuality and immodeſt affection, although it be ſometimes concealed; at leaſt they excite it, and give a beginning to many ſins and uncleanneſſes. For this reaſon a good author calls them very properly "The bitings of the Devil, and an "earneſt of ſin†."

Add alſo to theſe cauſes *unchaſte books*, which you ought to fly as the plague of the ſoul, and the certain corruption of chaſtity.

Theſe are the moſt ordinary cauſes of immodeſty, which you ought carefully to avoid, if you deſire to be freed from their pernicious effect. To fly them to the purpoſe, and as you ought, *Theotime*, take notice of thoſe you are ſubject to, and which keep you under their dominion; which when obſerved avoid to the utmoſt of your power. For example, if it be idleneſs, apply all your care to overcome it by labour. If it be intemperance, be ſober in your diet, and obſerve ſome abſtinence with the advice of your director.

## ARTICLE VI.

### *Other particular remedies againſt impurity.*

YOU muſt not only fly the cauſes of impurity, you muſt likewiſe apply other remedies which are proper to cure and entirely overcome it. I ſhall give you theſe four, all which are not only moſt neceſſary againſt this ſin, but very efficacious to preſerve you from it.

One of theſe remedies is prayer, God is the author of purity; we muſt beg it of him, and the grace to reſiſt the motions of that wretched concupiſcence, which excites continual rebellions againſt the ſpirit. Aſk it daily, *Theotime*, but not as St. *Auguſtine*‡ begged it in his youth, deſiring chaſtity, yet afraid to obtain it; but beg it ardently, and with an earneſt longing to acquire it from God. *Create a clean heart in me, O God, and renew a right ſpirit within my bowels*§

If

* Eccli. ix. 5, 8, 9. † Euſeb. Emiſſ. Hom. de Quadr. ‡ L. 28. con. 7.
§ Pſalm l. 12.

If you pray for it, you will obtain it; and remember to recommend yourself to the Bleſſed Virgin, as we have ſaid above, Part 2. Chap. 19.

Another remedy is *frequent confeſſion* to a diſcreet director. This remedy is very neceſſary and efficacious againſt ſins of impurity. Thoſe who neglect it, never are cured; but ſuch as make a right uſe of it, find great aſſiſtance in freeing themſelves from this curſed vice. To ſhew the neceſſity of a wiſe guide againſt this ſin, St. *Auſtin* deploring the diſorders of his youth, which was involved in theſe crimes from the age of ſixteen, laments that he had not then met with a diſcreet perſon, who might have rooted out his laſcivious paſſions, which encreaſed in his ſoul without number or meaſure. Your confeſſor, *Theotime*, will do you this good office. And St. *Jerome*, after he had related the method by which a ſuperior of a monaſtery had delivered a young man from violent temptations with which he was troubled, makes this reflection*. "If this young man had been alone, how could he have ever con-"quered theſe aſſaults?" You ſee by this, *Theotime*, how much the aſſiſtance of a diſcreet perſon is neceſſary in overcoming the ſin of impurity.

The next remedy I ſhall aſſign is *reading and meditating* on pious things, which fill the mind with good thoughts, baniſh wicked ones, and fortify it in the time of temptations. Such are principally the thoughts of the grievouſneſs of ſin, of the juſtice of God, of his greatneſs, of his goodneſs, and other ſubjects, which you will find in the following chapter, Art. 3. the remembrance of death, of judgment, and of eternal torments. See alſo 2d Vol. of contrition.

The laſt remedy I ſhall mention is *labour*. This helps to divert the mind from bad thoughts, and to take away from the fleſh the opportunity of rebellion againſt reaſon. You will find by experience, that this is an excellent remedy if you carefully apply it. St. *Jerome* recounts a very notable example of himſelf†, which may be of ſervice to you. He ſays, that being a young man, ſhut up in the ſolitude of the wilderneſs, whither he retired for the practice of virtue, he could not ſupport the heats of his youth, which cauſed continual and violent temptations; and though he repreſſed them with frequent faſtings, his mind was ſtill moleſted with impure thoughts: for the conquering of which he thought of a moſt efficacious means. He puts himſelf under the conduct of an

* Ad Euſtoch. † Ep. ad Ruſt.

an *Hebrew* maſter, not diſdaining even an alphabet, after ſtudying the judicious rules of *Quintilian*, the eloquence of *Cicero*, the grave ſtile of *Fronto*, and the ſmoothneſs of *Pliny*. This ſtudy was attended with ſo much difficulty, that he frequently left off, deſpairing to be able to attain to his deſire; yet afterwards he renewed his pains owing to his ſollicitude for learning it. The aſſiduity of his labour was recompenſed with the fruit he received from thence: for he here obtained what he ſought for by it, *viz.* the deliverance from his violent temptations, enjoying afterwards a ſweet tranquillity. And "I give God thanks ſays he, that from this bitter ſeed "of ſtudy I now gather moſt pleaſing fruits." Behold, *Theotime*, what an effectual remedy labour is againſt the vice of impurity.

## CHAP. IX.

### *Of temptations.*

I Treat here of temptations, becauſe although one may be tempted to all ſorts of ſins, yet the temptations to impurity are more frequent, eſpecially among youth, more difficult to encounter, and become a greater obſtacle to their ſalvation. For this reaſon it is highly neceſſary, that they ſhould be well inſtructed how to reſiſt and overcome them.

### ARTICLE I.

*What temptation is, and of the means to know whether one hath ſinned during a temptation.*

*What temptation is.*

WE call temptation a propoſal of ſin made to the ſoul, to induce her to commit it, or rather a thought alluring to ſin.

*Sin may be conſented to three ways.*

Now the ſoul may conſent to ſin three ways. 1. By actually doing it. 2. In not performing, but deſiring to perform it. 3. Neither performing nor deſiring, but taking pleaſure or delight in thinking on the ſin. In other words, the will may conſent to ſin by the action, by the deſire, and by complacency or wilful delectation. From hence ariſe two things which ought to be well taken notice of.

1. That there is nothing but conſent which cauſes the ſin, and by conſequence the thought alone of a ſin, is not a ſin, as long as the will does not conſent in one of thoſe three ways; and although the

the thought ſhould continue a long time, it is not a ſin without conſent; but on the contrary, it is meritorious to reject it.

*An important remark.*

2. To know whether we have ſinned mortally in a temptation, it is not ſufficient to conſider whether we have done a wicked action, or deſired it; but we muſt take notice whether we have wilfully taken pleaſure in thinking on it: For the voluntary thinking with pleaſure on a mortal ſin, is a mortal ſin. This muſt be well obſerved, becauſe many deceive themſelves therein, and believe they have not conſented to a temptation, but when they deſired the evil to which they were tempted.

Nevertheleſs, one thing is here to be obſerved, *viz.* that there are two ſorts of delight in temptation; the one which precedes the conſent which is that one feels in the beginning of the temptation, and which draws the will to conſent. The other which follows the conſent, and it is that which the will takes in the thing propoſed. This ſecond delight is a ſin, becauſe voluntary; but not the firſt, which is not voluntary.

Wherefore, to ſee whether you have ſinned by delectation in an evil thought, you muſt know whether you gave conſent to it. And becauſe an action cannot be voluntary, except knowledge went before, to judge whether you conſented to that delectation, you muſt take notice whether you perceived it, and how you behaved yourſelf after you reflected on it, *viz.* whether you continued to entertain yourſelf therewith or no; for if you continued in it, it is voluntary, and you muſt have ſinned. And this ſin was either mortal or venial; mortal, if you continued with a deliberate will, or by a voluntary and affected negligence. Venial, if that continuation was through inadvertence, and without an entire conſent, not deſiring really to pleaſe yourſelf therein, and yet alſo not uſing neceſſary endeavours to reject it.

## ARTICLE II.

*That one cannot avoid being tempted, and that we muſt be prepared betimes to reſiſt temptations.*

SON, *when thou comeſt to the ſervice of God, ſtand in juſtice, and in fear, and prepare thy ſoul for temptation**. It is a certain maxim, that we cannot live here without temptations. This life is a perpetual combat, according to that of ſcripture: *The life of man upon earth is a warfare*†. We have enemies which aſſault us on every

* Eccli. ii. 1. † Job vii. 1.

every ſide, within and without, viſible and inviſible. The world and exterior things furniſh us with continual occaſions of ſin. The diſorder of concupiſcence perpetually rebels againſt the ſpirit. The Devil, who watches night and day for our deſtruction, employs all his forces to make us fall into it.

Now if this common enemy conſpires generally the ruin of all men, it is certain he applies moſt vigorouſly the violence of his temptations againſt thoſe, who withdraw themſelves from him to ſerve their Creator, according to the obſervation of the fathers, St. *Leo*, St. *Greg.* &c. And, among thoſe, he attacks moſt ſtrongly young people, whom he endeavours to withdraw from the ſervice of God, that he may render their ruin certain and inevitable.

*We muſt not be impatient in temptations.*

Hence you muſt not wonder if you meet with frequent temptations, nor loſe patience under them; they are unavoidable in a chriſtian life. Temptations are often the effects of vicious habits contracted by former ſins; ſometimes they ſpring from the occaſions unto which you voluntarily and by your own fault expoſe yourſelf. In theſe two caſes you have no reaſon to complain but of yourſelf. Without theſe two cauſes your age will lead you into many temptations: the enemy will not let you reſt, or if he do, it is but to ſurpriſe you more eaſily. You muſt therefore diſpoſe yourſelf courageouſly for the combat, and prepare the neceſſary arms to defend yourſelf in that warfare. Have a good heart then, you will not be alone in this combat; God will be there with you, to aſſiſt you to gain the victory, and, with the victory, great advantages for your ſalvation.

*Three great benefits from temptations.*

For theſe temptations ſerve, 1. To keep you humble, and in the fear of falling into ſin, and always to make you ſtand upon your guard by prayer, and other neceſſary means. 2. To confirm you more and more in virtue, and daily to advance therein: for every reſiſtance you make to temptation, is a renewing and confirmation of the firm reſolution you have made not to offend God any more upon any account whatſoever, and it merits new grace from God to reſiſt temptations for the future. 3. Theſe temptations tend to ſecure your ſalvation, and increaſe your glory in heaven.

A R-

## ARTICLE III.

*Considerations to fortify the mind in temptations.*

TEmptation being a thought alluring to sin, the first remedy is to furnish the mind with contrary thoughts, which may divert it from the sin to which it is solicited. See here some of the most powerful, which will be able to raise a horror of sin in you, if you consider them attentively. Wherefore when you shall be tempted, and principally if the temptation be strong and obstinate, make one or more of these reflections.

1. What are you going to do? You are going by one action, and in a moment, to lose the grace of God, to make yourself his enemy, unworthy of all his favours, the object of his hatred and indignation: you are going to renounce heaven, to lose all the good you have ever done, to render yourself a slave to the Devil, and subject to eternal damnation.

2. But for what are you about to expose yourself to so many evils? For the deceitful satisfaction of a wicked thought, of an unchaste desire, of a disgraceful action, which will make you like a brute, but is unworthy of a man: a pleasure which will last but a moment, and being past, leaves nothing behind it but sorrow, vexation and remorse of conscience, which will incessantly haunt you. Do you act like a man when you make such a choice?

*The greatness of him offended.*

3. Consider the dignity of him you are about to offend: you offend God infinite in power, in greatness, in majesty, in holiness. God, whom all creatures adore, in whose presence the angels tremble: you are going to revolt from him, to cast off the yoke of his obedience, and say rebel like, *I will not serve* *. Wretched man, despicable creature! You are going to fly in the face of your creator. What an indignity is this! Do you understand, *Theotime*, that the injury sin does to God is so great, that it were better the whole world were destroyed, than one sin committed?

4. If you could conceal your sin from God, and not offend him in his presence, you would be less blameable; but you offend him before his face, knowing that he sees you, and looks upon the sin you are about to commit with horror. What greater affront can you offer him than this? You would blush for shame, if you should

* Jerem. ii. 20.

ſhould think yourſelf ſeen by a man in this action, and are you under no confuſion at being ſeen by God himſelf? and at doing that in his adorable preſence, which you would be aſhamed to do in the preſence of the meaneſt mortal? Can you ſhow a greater contempt of God than this! If you will offend God, ſeek at leaſt a place where he is not; and if you cannot find it, be aſhamed to let that holy and adorable eye ſee you in your ſin: and be afraid to commit a crime before the face of him who is at the ſame time both *witneſs and judge*, and who could ſtrike you dead the moment you have committed it.

5. Turn your eyes upon the goodneſs of him you are going to offend. Who is it that you offend? Nothing leſs than your celeſtial father, who has made you what you are, who has given you all that you poſſeſs, who preſerves you inceſſantly, and without whoſe aſſiſtance you could not move a hand. You breathe only by the air he gives you; and if he ſhould abandon you but one moment, you would inſtantly fall into nothing. Look upon yourſelf from head to foot, and you will find nothing but what comes from God: yet in the midſt of all theſe favours and benefits you dare criminally to offend him, deſpiſing the goodneſs of ſo liberal a God, the love of ſo kind a father, and making uſe of his own bleſſings againſt himſelf. Go, you ungrateful and degenerate child, more cruel than beaſts! Tigers have a love for him that feeds them, and you fear not to offend the author of all the good you have.

Laſtly, ſtrive to fortify yourſelf againſt temptation, by contemplating the paſſion of his Son *Jeſus Chriſt*, which is the maſter piece of his love; here you will find wherewith entirely to break the attempts of the moſt violent temptations, more than any where elſe. Caſt your eyes upon your Saviour nailed upon the croſs, covered with wounds, overwhelmed with grief, dying for your ſalvation. Fix there your mind and thoughts, conſider, meditate attentively all that he ſuffered; remember that it was for you, and for the ſins you have committed, that he ſuffered in ſuch a manner, and ſee whether you have a heart hard and cruel enough to reſolve to offend again a God dying for your ſalvation, and crucify him a-new by mortal ſin. If the ſight of a God crucified for your ſins be not able to hinder you from offending him, will not the blood he ſhed for your ſalvation ſoften your heart? Will not all the pains he endured for you have force to make you love him? All the wounds he received are ſo many mouths and voices, crying out, A hor-

ror of ſin, a love of *Jeſus*; and can you behold them without either having a horror for ſin, which crucified *Chriſt Jeſus*, or a love for *Jeſus Chriſt* crucified for your ſins? O *Jeſus*, permit it not, but cauſe by thy goodneſs, that the ſole thought of thy death ſo touch our hearts in temptation, that it raiſe in us a horror of ſin, and make us reſolve to chuſe rather to die than offend him again, who died for the love of us.

## ARTICLE IV.

*How we muſt behave in temptations.*

FROM the moment that you perceive yourſelf aſſaulted with a temptation entering your mind, be careful readily to reject it without dwelling thereon ever ſo little; it is the chief remedy given by the holy fathers, and particularly by St. *Jerome* *.

Now that you may thus ſtifle temptations in their birth, remember to perform two things. 1. Raiſe your mind to God, and proteſt unto him that you renounce the temptation with all your heart, and will not conſent to it: beg of him the aſſiſtance of his grace to reſiſt it, often making the ſign of the croſs on your heart, to drive from thence the enemy of your ſalvation. It is incredible, *Theotime*, how powerful prayer is in the moment of temptation, eſpecially when joined with a perfect confidence in the death of our Lord. 2. After that elevation of your mind, divert yourſelf by applying your thoughts to ſomething, as work, reading, talking, recreation, or other like thing, which may keep your mind employed, and you will find by experience that the temptation oftentimes without trouble will vaniſh.

If it continues to return, perſevere in employing theſe two means; pray with more fervour, proteſt that you will not conſent, proceed in entertaining your mind with ſomething elſe. If you be all alone, it will be good to ſtir up yourſelf by ſome exterior action of devotion, as to raiſe your eyes or hands towards heaven, ſmite your breaſt, caſt yourſelf on your knees to aſk of God the grace to reſiſt. See the example of St. *Jerome*, Art. 8. It would alſo be of advantage to terrify yourſelf with the remembrance of death, with the thoughts of God's judgments and of eternal damnation, according to that important advice of the wiſe man, *Remember thy laſt end, and thou ſhalt never ſin* †.

Be

* Ep. ad Euſtochium 22. † Eccli. vii. 40.

Be ſure not to dwell upon the temptation itſelf, but apply your mind to think upon the motives which may deter you. For this end, eſpecially when the temptation continues a long time, endeavour to reflect upon one or more of the former conſiderations, and after you have weighed them well, make a final reſolution never to conſent thereto, although it ſhould return a thouſand times. *An important advice.*

Not to content yourſelf with rejecting a temptation, but to take an occaſion from thence of performing ſome act of piety, is alſo a moſt effectual remedy againſt it. For example, on the day you have been tempted, apply yourſelf more to prayer than ordinarily, read ſome pious book, mortify yourſelf, give ſome alms to the poor; and above all in the time of temptation exerciſe ſome act of virtue, as deteſting ſin, loving God with all your heart, proteſting you will never offend him. By this means you will defeat your enemy with his own arms; and he ſeeing that, inſtead of moving you to ſin by his temptations, he gives you occaſion to practiſe virtue, will deſiſt from tempting you, fearing to advance your ſalvation by the ſame means he employed to deſtroy you. *Another advice, to make uſe of the temptation, as a motive to ſome virtuous action.*

But above all, *Theotime*, be careful when you reſiſt a temptation, not to confide in your own ſtrength; but to expect all from the grace of God. This is the beſt means of ſubduing temptations, humbly acknowledging that you can do nothing of yourſelf without the help of divine grace. By how much more you diffide in your own ſtrength, putting your confidence only in God, by ſo much more eaſily will you ſurmount them. " See, " ſays St. *Auguſtine* *, little *David* combating *Goliah*. He was a " youth without force, without arms, who encountered a giant " armed, from head to foot; but becauſe he put all his con- " fidence in God, he gained the victory. *Thou comeſt to me* " (ſaid *David* to *Goliah*) *with a ſword and with a ſpear, but I* " *come to thee in the name of the Lord of hoſts* †, and in that " confidence he overthrew him at the firſt ſtroke. Thus muſt you " encounter with the enemy of your ſalvation. He (ſays St. *Au-* *Third advice, to diſtruſt one's own ſtrength.*



* Serm. 4. de Verb. Apoſt. † 1 Kings xvii. 45.

" *guſtine)* who truſts in his own ſtrength, is overcome before he " fights."

Now the principal means to obtain many helps from God in temptation are prayer, and frequenting the ſacraments of confeſſion and communion, which have a wonderful efficacy againſt temptations, and without which it is morally impoſſible to reſiſt any long time.

## ARTICLE V.

*Of ſome artifices by which the Devil deceives men, eſpecially youth, in temptations.*

ALL the force of the Devil in temptations conſiſts only in craft and deceit; wherefore the beſt way to reſiſt him is to know the tricks he uſually employs.

*Firſt artifice.* The firſt is, that by which he hinders them from knowing or conſidering the evil which is in the ſin they are going to commit; on the contrary, he repreſents in lively colours the pleaſure of ſin, which he always makes them think far greater than it is, as well as the trouble and difficulty of reſiſting and abſtaining from it, which he makes them believe unſurmountable.

*The deceit of this artifice.* Who does not ſee how great the illuſion is in all theſe three things? For the evil which is in ſin is the greateſt of all misfortunes, as we have ſaid above, Art. 3. The pleaſure of ſin is but for a moment, and is followed by vexation, ſadneſs, and deſpair. The trouble of reſiſtance continues not long, and a ſweet and pleaſing conſolation follows it; it merits heaven, and frequently the deliverance from many other temptations.

*The remedy.* Permit not yourſelf to be thus abuſed by the enemy of your ſalvation: when he ſhall propoſe a temptation to you, conſider the evil you are going to do, which is a mortal ſin, the greateſt of all evils. Think not on the pleaſure that is offered, which will paſs like a ſhadow, but upon the ſorrow and diſpleaſure it brings after it. Regard not the pain and difficulty of reſiſtance, but the joy and conſolation you will receive from your victory. If you act thus, you will find that the temptation will ſoon vaniſh.

The

The second deceit by which the Devil seduces young people, is to propose, during the temptation, the easiness of pardon, and persuade them that they will do penance, and confess it to a Priest. *Second artifice.* How frequently, *Theotime*, does it fall out, alas! too often, that in the combat of temptation, the conscience resisting on her side by the good motions God gives her, this unhappy thought comes into the mind, I will confess it, I will do penance for it: and with this thought one unhappily resolves to commit this sin. What! if you imagined that God presently after the sin would cast you into the pit of hell, you would not offend him; and because you hope he will pardon you, you do not scruple to displease him. What impiety is this! Will you be impious because God is good? Do you offend him because he will pardon you? If ever this thought comes into your mind, reject it as a blasphemy, and as a wile of the Devil, by which he would plunge you into the abyss of sin.

The third deceit of the Devil towards young persons, is, that after he has made them sometimes yield to his temptations by the former artifices, he puts into their minds this false and wicked notion, that it is impossible to resist temptations, and to abstain from sin; that, being thus persuaded, they may make no endeavours to resist them, but give themselves up to evil without any restraint. *Third artifice.* *The falseness of this persuasion.*

Detestable persuasion! diabolical invention! which is so much the more deplorable, as it is most false and pernicious, yet most common amongst youth. Insensible creatures! what is it that dazzles you thus, so that you cannot see the truth more clear than day? Do you not see how injurious this thought is to the mercy of your Saviour, who has shed his blood to merit for you grace to resist on these occasions, and who stretches out his arms to assist you? This persuasion comes not from him who calls you to himself to save you, but from the Devil, who seeks to destroy you past recovery.

Permit not yourself to be seduced by this execrable thought, but in the midst of the most violent temptations call to mind the mercy of your Saviour, who never abandons those who hope in him. *They*, says the wise man, *The remedies.*

*compaſſed me on every ſide, and there was no one that would help me. I remembered thy mercy, O Lord, how thou deliverest them that wait for thee. And thou haſt ſaved me from deſtruction* *.

Theſe are the three moſt ordinary artifices the Devil makes uſe of againſt young perſons in temptations, and all three are purſued in order. Firſt, he hides from them the evil, and makes them believe it is not ſo great as in reality it is. Next, he perſuades them that they may eaſily free themſelves from it. And laſtly, when he has them deeply engaged, he makes the difficulty of refraining to appear very great, that they may not attempt to deliver themſelves from it. Reflect well upon theſe three artifices, and have a care not to be deluded by them.

## ARTICLE VI.

*Of two conſiderable faults uſual with young perſons in temptations.*

BESIDES the fault they commit, who permit themſelves to be deceived by the three former artifices, they fall into two others much more dangerous.

*Firſt fault.* The firſt is, that when they ſee themſelves attacked by frequent temptations, they preſently become impatient, and after having reſiſted a while, loſe courage, and yield to the enemy, believing that they cannot reſiſt him any longer. This error is very common among young people, and it gives a great advantage to the enemy of their ſalvation over them.

When the city of *Bethulia* in *Judea* was beſieged by *Holofernes*, the heads of the town, with all the people, betook themſelves to their prayers, to obtain of God their deliverance; and ſeeing God did not hear them ſo ſoon as they expected, they reſolved to deliver themſelves up, if ſuccour did not come in five days. The courageous *Judith* hearing of this reſolution, diſapproved it much, and ſharply reprehended them, ſaying, *Who are you that tempt the Lord? This is not a word that may draw down mercy, but rather that may ſtir up wrath, and enkindle indignation. You have ſet a time for the mercy of the Lord, and you have appointed him a day, according to your pleaſure. But for as much as the Lord is patient let us be penitent for this ſame thing, and with many tears let us beg his pardon. Let us humbly wait for his conſolation* †.

I ſay

* Eccli. li. 10, 11, 12, 16. † Judith viii. 11, 12, 13, 14, 20.

I say the same to you, dear *Theotime*, when losing patience in temptations, and despairing to be able to resist them, you take a resolution at length to deliver yourself over to your enemy, by which conduct you offer a great injury to God; for this is to distrust his grace, and dispose of it as you please: this is not the means to obtain it, but on the contrary, by this diffidence you render yourself more unworthy of his mercy, are at a greater distance from his grace, and expose yourself to more grievous temptations, and to fall into sin without resistance. No, no, you must not act thus, you must have patience in temptations, and humbly expect the divine grace, which will never fail you, except you be wanting to it first. If you persevere courageously to resist, he will either deliver you from the temptations, or give you grace to overcome them. Remember that the greatest saints have been tempted like you, and much more: call to mind the apostle St. *Paul*, who having begged of God to be delivered from great temptations, received this answer from him: *My grace is sufficient for thee: for power is made perfect in infirmity* *.

The second fault young persons commit in temptations, is, that when they once chance to yield to the enemy, they lose courage, lay down their arms, and permit themselves to be overcome by all other temptations, without any resistance. What a strange blindness is this, for being once conquered, to submit entirely to the enemy; after having received some wounds, to be content to receive many more; after having lost the grace of God, to continue to provoke more and more his fury, instead of readily appeasing it by penance! Can any thing be more opposite to reason and common sense? *Second fault.*

The *Israelites* being assembled to fight against the tribe of *Benjamin*, to revenge a most enormous crime committed by some of that tribe, although they were far more numerous, they were defeated in the first and second battle. These two overthrows highly astonished them, nevertheless they lost not courage; they came before the tabernacle of God, and there they set themselves to weep, to fast, to make their supplications, and offer sacrifices to appease the divine anger. This being done, they took their arms again, and courageously returned to battle, where they gained the victory, and entirely defeated their enemies †.

This, *Theotime*, is exactly what you must do in the combat of temptations; you must not be discouraged for being once conquered,



* 2 Cor. xii. 9. † Jud. xx.

ed, but chearfully riſe again: you muſt have recourſe to God, lament your miſery, beg pardon of him, appeaſe his anger, implore the aſſiſtance of his Grace, and after having done penance for your ſins, re-aſſume your arms in the name of God, and fight more courageouſly than before. The ſorrow for being vanquiſhed muſt excite you to reſiſt your enemy more reſolutely, and your defeat muſt make you ſtand better upon your guard for the future. Do ſo then, dear *Theotime*, and be punctual in following this advice, if you ſhould be ſo unhappy as to fall into ſin.

## ARTICLE VII.

*What is to be done after the temptation is overcome.*

*Two faults after the temptation is overcome.*

WE ordinarily commit two faults after we are delivered from a temptation. The firſt is, we give not thanks to God for the victory we have gained by the aſſiſtance of his grace. The ſecond, we make no preparation to reſiſt future temptations. Theſe two defects are the cauſe why we eaſily fall into other temptations, and are at length overcome by them. The firſt, becauſe God would have us acknowledge his favours eſpecially great ones, ſuch as a victory over temptation. The ſecond, becauſe he who doth not ſtand upon his guard, is ſoon ſurpriſed by his enemy.

*Firſt remedy.*

1. It is therefore moſt important, *Theotime*, when you have ſurmounted a temptation, that you take care to give God thanks for it, either immediately after the temptation, or at leaſt at the end of the day in your evening prayers. Return him thanks with all your heart for this victory, acknowledge that it comes from him alone, and not from yourſelf, and that without him you had been a thouſand times vanquiſhed.

*Second remedy.*

2. Prepare yourſelf to reſiſt temptations for the future. 1. Making a firm proteſtation to God, to reſiſt them with all your power. 2. Humbly begging the continuance of his aſſiſtance. 3. Reſolving to make uſe of ſuch and ſuch means as you know to be uſeful.

If it chance that you remain ſome time without temptation, confide not too much in this peace and tranquility: "for it frequently happens, as St. *Gregory* obſerves *, that the enemy permits

* 3 Mor. 16.

" mits thoſe whom he has much tempted, to continue ſome time " in quiet, that he may ſurpriſe them more eaſily, when they " think leaſt of him, and make them fall into ſin by a ſudden and " violent temptation." For this reaſon ſtand always upon your guard, aſking daily of God grace to reſiſt the aſſaults of the enemy. Be careful to remove quickly from your mind all the firſt thoughts that may move you to ſin, as we have ſaid before, Art. IV.

## ARTICLE VIII.

*A remarkable example to teach us how we muſt encounter temptations.*

AN ancient author * ſays very well, " that the way to learn by " precept is very long, but that by example is much ſhorter " and moſt efficacious." Wherefore it will be much to the purpoſe, to ſet here before your eyes ſome of thoſe who have courageouſly reſiſted temptations, that their example may ſtir up your courage, and teach you how to manage the arms with which they have happily overcome.

Amongſt many others, I have choſen out the great St. *Jerome*, whom I would propoſe to you for a model and example. He was young, as you are, at the time of theſe temptations; he was more tempted than ever you will be, and perhaps of all the ſervants of God, his youth was moſt tried by temptations. He encountered them with an admirable perſeverance, from whence he gained moſt glorious victories. I ſhall give you his own relation of it: read it attentively, and mark well all the circumſtances.

This ſaint being yet young, after he had ſpent ſome time in a worldly life, was moved with a deſire of ſerving God, and labouring for his ſalvation by a true converſion. He takes a reſolution to leave the world, and to retire into ſome wilderneſs to do penance, and apply himſelf entirely to virtue. He went firſt to *Jeruſalem*, to viſit the holy places, and from thence he retired into the deſert.

He continued in that place four years, during which, notwithſtanding the incredible auſterities he underwent, he was aſſaulted with continual and ſo great temptations as muſt affect thoſe who read them. Behold what he ſays, writing to Euſtochium †.

" In the remoteſt part of a wild and ſharp deſert, which being " burnt up with the heats of the ſcorching ſun, ſtrikes with hor-

" rour

* Seneca. Epiſt. 6. † Epiſt. 22. de. Virgin. c. 3.

" rour and terrour even the monks that inhabit it, I ſeemed to " myſelf to be in the midſt of the delights and aſſemblies of Rome. " I loved ſolitude, that in the bitterneſs of my ſoul, I might " more freely bewail my miſeries, and call upon my Saviour. My " hideous emaciated limbs were covered with ſackcloth: My " ſkin was parched dry and black, and my fleſh was almoſt waſted " away. The days I paſſed in tears and groans, and when ſleep " overpowered me againſt my will, I caſt my wearied bones, " which hardly hung together, upon the bare ground, not ſo pro- " perly to give them reſt, as to torture myſelf. I ſay nothing of " my eating and drinking; for the monks in that deſert, when " they are ſick, know no other drink but cold water, and look upon it " as ſenſuality ever to eat any thing dreſſed by fire. In this exile and " priſon, to which for the fear of hell I had voluntarily condemned " myſelf; having no other company but ſcorpions and wild beaſts, " I many times found my imagination filled with lively repreſenta- " tions of dances in the company of Roman ladies, as if I had " been in the midſt of them. My face was pale with faſting; " yet my will felt violent aſſaults of irregular deſires. In my cold " body, and in my parched up fleſh, which ſeemed dead before " its death, concupiſcence was able to live."

See the temptations which this ſaint endured, and the rude aſ- ſaults he ſuſtained; but conſider how this generous champion behaved himſelf.

" Though I vigorouſly repreſſed all its ſallies, it ſtrove always to " riſe again, and to caſt forth more violent and dangerous flames. " Finding myſelf abandoned as it were to the power of this ene- " my, I threw myſelf in ſpirit at the feet of Jeſus, watering " them with my tears, and I tamed my fleſh by faſting whole " weeks. I am not aſhamed to diſcloſe my temptations, but I " grieve that I am not now what I then was. I often joined whole " nights to the days, crying, ſighing and beating my breaſt till " the deſired calm returned. I feared the very cell in which I " lived, becauſe it was witneſs to the foul ſuggeſtions of my ene- " my; and being angry and armed with ſeverity againſt myſelf, I " went alone into the moſt ſecret parts of the wilderneſs, and if I " diſcovered any where a deep valley or a craggy rock, that was " the place of my prayer, there I threw this miſerable ſack of my " body."

What an example, *Theotime*, is this, to teach you how to en- counter temptations! But hearken yet to what follows.

" The

" The same Lord is my witness, that after many sobs and " tears, after having in much sorrow looked long up to heaven, I " felt most delightful comforts and interiour sweetness; and these " so great, that, transported and absorpt, I seemed to myself to be " amidst the choirs of angels: and glad and joyful I sung to God: " *after thee, O Lord, we will run in the fragrancy of thy celestial* " *ointments* *."

What an example, *Theotime*, is this, to animate you to encounter the temptations of youth! O how admirable and instructive is this for you, and all those of your age! For among others it teaches you three things of great importance. 1. That you ought not to be astonished to see yourself tempted, since this holy saint in his youth, notwithstanding all his mortifications, and removed from all occasions of sin, suffered a long time so great temptations. 2. It will teach you how to fight against temptations, *viz.* by mortifications, and above all by humble, fervent, and persevering prayer. And in the third place, you there learn the greatness of the joy God gives to those who have resisted temptations with much courage and perseverance.

*Three things to be learnt from saint* Jerome.

Set this excellent example often before your eyes. When you shall be tempted, represent unto yourself St *Jerome* in the desert, encountering his temptations with tears, with prayers, with mortification, casting himself at the feet of *Jesus Christ*, and imploring his assistance. Imitate him, let your closet be a solitude, where you will receive God's assistance against temptations; and be assured, that after your prayer God will send you tranquillity, and make you feel an incredible joy and consolation, which will animate you anew to resist temptations, and serve your Saviour more faithfully than ever.

*Practice.*

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## CHAP. X.

### *Obstacles peculiar to rich young persons.*

THE obstacles we have spoken of hitherto, are common to all youth of whatever quality or condition. But because among the several conditions of life, there are some which are attended with

* Canti. i. 3.

with particular obſtacles, it is proper to treat briefly of them. Theſe conditions are chiefly riches, and nobility.

As for riches, there is no queſtion but they are a particular obſtacle to ſalvation, ſince the Son of God himſelf aſſures us, that they choke the ſeed of the word of God in ſouls, and hinder it from taking root, and bringing forth fruit*, which is true, not only of men already advanced in age, in whom covetouſneſs and the love of riches too often prevail, but alſo in young men, to whom the poſſeſſion of riches is frequently a hinderance to ſalvation.

This is confirmed by experience, which evinces, that rich young people are frequently more vicious than others. We ſee them addicted to pleaſure, ſlothful, and averſe to labour, their minds always taken up with vanity, aſpiring after greatneſs, fortune, and the riches of the world, proud, preſumptuous, deſpiſing others, untractable, and reſiſting the moſt ſalutary inſtruction and advice, ſubject to much vice, oftentimes malicious and ingenious in committing ſin. And on the contrary, we ſee young perſons of low condition or ſmall fortune, live in the fear of God, deſirous of ſecuring their ſalvation and advancing in virtue, laborious, ſeeking good inſtructions, and receiving them with joy and much fruit, flying from ſin, or recovering inſtantly if they chance to fall into it. And by this means they heap the bleſſings of God upon themſelves; for God is pleaſed to favour the humble, and thoſe who fear him, as on the contrary he rejects the proud, and thoſe *that truſt in their own ſtrength, and glory in the multitude of their riches*†.

I ſay this, *Theotime*, to warn you, that, if God has pleaſed that you ſhould be born in opulence, you take care leſt your riches become the occaſion of your damnation, as they do daily to many; the multitude whereof makes but too evident that truth, *how hardly ſhall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God*‡. Wherefore perform three things.

1. Be fully perſuaded that your riches will obſtruct your ſalvation, unleſs you both employ them to advantage, and preſerve yourſelf from their dangerous temptations.

2. Endeavour to underſtand what theſe are, that you may diligently avoid them. There are many, ſuch as pride, untractableneſs, idleneſs, love of pleaſures, vicious company, flattery, &c.

Be humble in your riches, remembering what St. *Auſtin*§ ſays, "that they occaſion haughtineſs; that as every ſort of fruit has its "par-

* Luke viii. 14. † Pſalm xlviii. 6. ‡ Luc. xviii. 24. § Serm. 5. de verb. Domini.

" particular worm, pride is the worm of riches." In order to humble this pride, conſider on the one ſide the danger they daily put you in of offending God, and loſing your ſoul; and on the other ſide, the rigorous account you muſt render to God of the good uſe you have made of them. Wherefore do you glory in the riches you poſſeſs, which God can take away in a moment? and with which, as the wiſe man ſays *, you cannot obtain true riches, that is, wiſdom and virtue, which if you poſſeſs not, you, with all your goods, are but like a horſe richly caparisoned, which with all his ornaments is but a beaſt without reaſon.

Become docile and tractable; be ready to learn, and willing to be reprehended; and be aſſured, that the more noble and rich you are, the better you ought to be inſtructed, becauſe you are ſo much the more expoſed, and your faults are ſo much the more fatal than thoſe of others.

Fly idleneſs, ſo natural to the rich. Remember that the rich *are not in the labour of men: neither ſhall they be ſcourged like* other *men* †. Hence St. *Bernard* ‡ adds, " There is great reaſon to fear, " that they will be afflicted with the Devils."

Carefully avoid a voluptuous life, which is a great incentive to impurity. Remember that chaſtity is in the midſt of dangers and precipices, whilſt ſurrounded with riches, where an affected niceneſs as to diet, cloaths, ſleeping, and a thouſand other occaſions expoſe it to inevitable ruin, if not withſtood with the utmoſt precaution. *Wo be to you that are wealthy in Sion,* (ſays the prophet *Amos*) *you that ſleep upon beds of ivory, and are wanton on your couches: that eat the lambs out of the flock, &c. that drink wine in bowls, and anoint themſelves with the beſt ointments: and they are not concerned for the affliction of* Joſeph §. *Wo to you that are rich: for you have your conſolation* ¶.

Withdraw yourſelf from wicked company, which your riches will eaſily attract, as a prey invites birds.

Permit not yourſelf to be deceived by flattery, which always ſmiles upon the rich, and too often perverts their minds eſpecially youth, according to St. *Jerome* ‖. Give not credit to any thing they ſhall ſay in your commendation; for either they commend you for things that deſerve not praiſe, as your condition, your wealth, your good behaviour, or the like; or elſe for things you have

* Prov. xvii. † Pſ. lxxii. 5. ‡ Serm. ad Paſtores. § Amos vi. 1, 4, 6. ¶ Luke vi. 24. ‖ Epiſt. ad Celantiam.

have not, as ſcience, wiſdom, virtue; or if you have them, they come not from you. To value yourſelf on the firſt, is vanity; on the ſecond, folly; on the third, injuſtice: for you appropriate to yourſelf a glory due only to God.

3. There remains the third thing required for preventing the danger to which riches will expoſe your ſalvation, that is, to make good uſe of them. This is what St. *Paul* ordered *Timothy* to preſcribe to the rich: *Charge the rich of this world not to be high-minded, nor to truſt in uncertain riches, but in the living God, (who giveth us abundantly all things to enjoy.) To do good, to be rich in good works, to give eaſily, to communicate* to others, *to lay up in ſtore for themſelves a good foundation againſt the time to come, that they may lay hold on the true life**. This is the uſe of riches, which the Holy Ghoſt preſcribes to the wealthy, and which you ought exactly to practiſe, if you would prevent their becoming your ruin. Keep in your mind that great truth St. *Cyprian* teaches you, that "a great patrimony is a "temptation, if the revenue one poſſeſſes be not employed in "pious uſes; and the more a perſon abounds in wealth, the more "carefully ſhould he employ it, not to multiply, but to redeem "his ſins†."

## CHAP. XI.

### *Obſtables peculiar to gentry.*

TO number gentility among the obſtacles to virtue, were to offer an injury to it; yet we ſhall do no wrong to truth, if we ſay that the ill conduct of perſons of rank is a great impediment to their ſalvation, and frequently the cauſe of their ruin and damnation.

To ſee this truth and clearly underſtand, that there is no ſtate generally more corrupt and vicious, than that of people of diſtinction, we need only reflect a little on the life they lead.

They affect ſo much pride, that they contemn all the world, and eſteem all others infinitely below them. They are ſlaves to ambition. They are extravagantly addicted to pleaſures, effeminate, bold and ſhameleſs in publiſhing their ſins, and glorying in them, envious in the higheſt degree, attached to ſelf-intereſt, affectionate to none but themſelves, unjuſt, violent, harſh, and often cruel

* 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18, 19. † St. Cyp. lib. de habitu Virginum.

cruel towards others, especially their inferiors, impatient and passionate, addicted to swearing and blasphemies, revengeful even to excess, not being able to suffer or dissemble the least injury, which frequently is grounded only in their imagination, and even make open profession of never submitting to or dissembling any. What a life is this for men who make profession of the Christian religion!

*The detestable passion for duels.*

What adds much to the danger of this condition of life is, that detestable passion for duels, which so over-rules them, that there is scarce a moment in their life, wherein they are not resolved to fight upon the first injury, or at least upon the first challenge; a resolution which continually keeps them in mortal sin. Not to mention the contempt of religion, sensuality and impiety, which are much encouraged by the rich, especially in these our days, where so many are found to say to God, with the impious: *Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. Who is the Almighty that we should serve him? And what doth it profit to us if we pray to him**.

Is not this a thing much to be deplored, to see in the midst of Christianity, the fairest part of the Christian world most corrupted? And that the dignity of birth which is given as a reward and encouragement to virtue, should become the source of vice, and depravity in those who possess it? so that it is a mark of reprobation to many, who, it were to have been wished, had been born in a lower condition of life. "For what advantage is it to be "great before men, and contemptible in the sight of God†? To "be honoured by men, and hated by God? To command others, "and to be a slave to vice and his own passions?" And in a word, to be happy in this world, and damned for ever, being of the number of those who eternally cry out, *What hath pride profited us? or what advantage hath the boasting of riches brought us. All those things are passed away like a shadow. Therefore we have erred from the way of truth*‡.

Dear *Theotime*, if you be a person of distinction, I beseech you to reflect seriously on yourself, and on the danger to which your rank exposes your salvation. Distrust your state, and be afraid lest it ruin you. In proportion as you are raised in condition, your

* Job xxi. 14. 15. † Euseb. Emiss. Hom. 3. de Pascate. ‡ Wisd. v. 8, 9, 10.

your obligation to be virtuous, and the danger of your perdition encreaſe with your dignity. Labour earneſtly for your ſalvation, and uſe all poſſible diligence that your rank be not a cauſe of your damnation, as it is to many. For this effect, practiſe the following advices.

*First advice.* 1. Underſtand perfectly what true gentility is. Gentility is inſeparable from virtue, it takes its origin from thence, and is only preſerved by it. It has been beſtowed upon your anceſtors, in recompenſe of their worthy actions; if you imitate them in their virtue, you will merit the title of Gentlemen; if you imitate them not, you are only poſſeſſed of a falſe and imaginary gentility.

*Second advice.* 2. Know, that beſides this diſtinction inſtituted by men, there is a divine one infinitely ſuperior, which is that acquired by grace. For if gentility conſiſts in being born of illuſtrious parents, and of thoſe that are conſiderable in the world, what will it be to be made the child of God, coheir of *Jeſus Chriſt*, deſigned for the poſſeſſion of the kingdom of heaven? This, *Theotime*, is the great, the prime and true gentility; if you poſſeſs this, you are really diſtinguiſhed; and if you have it not, how noble ſoever you may be before men, you are moſt infamous and abominable in the ſight of God.

*Third advice.* 3. Wherefore permit not yourſelf to be puft up with pride and arrogance on account of your rank. "That is a wicked gentility (ſays "St. *Auſtin* *) which makes you contemptible in the ſight of God "by its pride." On the contrary, be ſo much more humble, as you are the greater, according to the precept of the wiſe man; *the greater thou art, the more humble thyſelf in all things, and thou ſhalt find grace before God* †. It is an excellent advice which St. *Jerome* gives to noblemen: "Prefer not yourſelf before others "by reaſon of your nobility, and contemn not thoſe who are not "noble. Our religion hath no reſpect to perſons, it regards not "the condition of men, but their minds; it judgeth of nobility by "their manners. There is no liberty in the ſight of God, but not "to ſerve ſin. The height of nobility is to be illuſtrious in virtue ‡."

4. En-

* Serm. 27. † Eccli. iii. 20. ‡ Epiſt. ad Celant.

4. Endeavour to obſerve well the ordinary vices of thoſe of your rank, that you may carefully avoid them; be ſure to withſtand them in good time, begging daily of God for this effect the aſſiſtance of his grace. Remember that the juſtice of God will be ſevere towards the great and noble, and their ſins will be puniſhed more rigorouſly than thoſe of others, as it is ſaid in the book of *Wiſdom**. *Fourth advice.*

5. Make your rank aſſiſt in advancing virtue. You will ſay, how can this be? See how. If being noble you be virtuous, firſt your virtue will be in ſome manner more agreeable to God, according to the judgment of St. *Bernard*†. Beſides, your example will move others to virtue, your diſcourſe will have more authority to perſuade them to good; they will give credit to you, when you mildly reprehend their faults. You will have means of comforting the afflicted, and relieving the oppreſſed; you may often compoſe differences, and reconcile enemies. *Fifth advice.*

6. Arm yourſelf particularly againſt the tyranny of duels, by a firm reſolution never to fight one. For this end, 1. Beg of God the grace to renounce from your heart that height of infatuation, and never to yield to it. 2. Be convinced that a duel is a wicked action, that it is a crime as great, as murder is enormous. Remember how murder is deteſted by the Almighty: it is a crime which deſtroys the image of God, and the work of his hands; God has it in ſuch abhorrence, that he wiſhes the perſon not to be pardoned who is guilty of it: *Whoſoever*, ſays he, *ſhall ſhed man's blood, his blood ſhall be ſhed: for man was made to the image of God*‡. He threatens to extend his revenge thereof even to a beaſt, which ſhould take away a man's life, to evince what a horror he has for murder. From this form a judgment of the quality of a duel, by which you endeavour to ſpill the blood of your brother, and what is yet more horrible, to involve in eternal miſery either the ſoul of your adverſary, or your own, for each of which *Jeſus Chriſt* has died: or, ſhould ſuch miſchief not enſue, you expoſe yourſelf, at leaſt, to evident danger of it, and are therefore equally criminal in the ſight of God, as if the effect had taken place. Conſider that this blood which you ſhall have ſhed, will cry to God for vengeance againſt you, as did that of *Abel* againſt *Cain*; that the ſoul which *Sixth advice.*



* C. vi. † Epiſt. ad Soph. ‡ Gen. ix. 6.

you have damned will curſe you eternally; that your conſcience will continually reproach you; and that divine judgment will overtake you either in this world, or the next. Think not that to refuſe a duel is to forfeit your honour: ſuch honour is imaginary: is it a loſs of real honour, to be condemned by the worldly and the wicked, whilſt you are praiſed by the wiſe and the good? A duel is contrary to the public good, and as ſuch is forbidden by your prince, to whom you owe obedience; as ſuch is puniſhed by the law. So much is a duel an enemy to your ſalvation, that the church, to whom the care of your ſalvation is entruſted, excommunicates all thoſe who fight a duel, or any way contribute to it, and deprives of eccleſiaſtical burial all thoſe who die in that combat: hence the Council of *Trent* calls a duel an invention of the Devil, to ruin ſouls by the bloody death of the body *. 3. Call to mind thoſe of your acquaintance who died in duels, and are loſt for ever: judge what they think now of duels, and what renunciations they would make of them, if they could return into this world: but there is no time for them. What if you were one of them? 4. When any one ſhall challenge you, anſwer him aloud, that you will not fight a duel being forbidden both by divine and human laws. If any one accuſe you of cowardice, tell him, that you know well how to ſhew your courage on proper occaſions, for the ſervice of your king and country. If he threatens to aſſault you whereſoever he ſhall find you, anſwer, that you will defend yourſelf, but make no appointment either directly or indirectly, ſaying, I paſs by ſuch a place, or the like: if after this he attack you, defend yourſelf. 5. Avoid the cauſes of duels, as quarrels and enmities. Offend no perſon; or if by imprudence, or otherwiſe, you wrong any one, make him amends, and declare you had no intention to offend him.

Practiſe all theſe things, and God will give a bleſſing to your rank, and you will be great both before God and men.

* Seſſ. 25.

*The end of the third Part.*

# THE INSTRUCTION of YOUTH IN CHRISTIAN PIETY.

## PART IV.

*Of the virtues neceſſary for young perſons.*

THIS, *Theotime*, is the chief part of your inſtruction, to which the three former relate as the means to their end; for after propoſing the motives to incline you to virtue, the neceſſary means of acquiring it, the obſtacles which might pervert you, and conſequently which ought to be avoided by youth; there now remains to ſet before you the practice of virtue, and ſhew the particular virtues to which you ought to apply yourſelf the more carefully in your youth, as the foundation of other virtues, which will be neceſſary for you in the courſe of your life.

### CHAP. I.

*That young people ought to propoſe to themſelves the example of our Lord* Jeſus *in his youth.*

SINCE it is a truth univerſally received, that Chriſtian piety, in all ſtates, conſiſts in imitating our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*, I would firſt of all propoſe here that divine pattern, to give you a perfect model of the virtues you ought to acquire, and by which you ought to form your youth.

It was for this reaſon, according to the obſervation of one of the fathers of the church, that this divine maſter being come to teach and ſave all men, was pleaſed to paſs through the ſeveral ages of man, to ſanctify them all, and by becoming like unto them, to invite them more eaſily to an imitation of himſelf.

" For this reaſon, ſays he, he made himſelf an infant to in-
" fants, that he might ſanctify them. He made himſelf a child
" to children, giving holineſs to thoſe of that age, to the end he
" might afford them in his perſon an example of piety and ſanctity,
" and ſubjection. He made himſelf a young man to young men,
" giving them a pattern, and ſanctifying them for the ſervice of
" our Lord*."

It is by this divine pattern of youth, dear *Theotime*, that you muſt form yours, and regulate your actions. It is from him that you muſt learn the virtues you ought to practiſe in that age: *Look and make* each act of virtue *according to the pattern which was ſhewed thee* †.

We find four things in the Goſpel concerning the ſon of God during the youth of his mortal life.

The firſt is his hidden life which he was pleaſed to lead all that time, not manifeſting himſelf to men, but only to his moſt bleſſed mother and St. *Joſeph*; to teach young people to fly vanity, ſo natural to their age, and ſo prejudicial to their good, and not to ſeek after the eſteem of the world by a vain oſtentation of their parts or virtues; but only to pleaſe God, and content their parents and maſters, by a ſolid progreſs in virtue and wiſdom.

The ſecond is the example of piety and religion he was pleaſed to give, by going to the temple at ſolemn feaſts, according to the command of the law, although he was not obliged to it; being there, he hearkened to the doctors, and aſked them queſtions, as if he would learn of them; he who was maſter of the doctors and of the law itſelf. An admirable example, by which he would ſhew young people the affection they ought to have for piety, and that their firſt care muſt be to ſerve God and labour for their ſalvation, accuſtoming themſelves to acts of religion, to prayer, to aſſiſt at the divine ſacrifice, to the ſacraments, to the word of God, and to ſeek inſtruction from the mouth of the wiſe, and from thoſe whom God has given them for their direction.

The third thing is that ſo admirable obedience he ſhewed his parents, which the goſpel deſcribes in theſe terms; *He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was ſubject to them* ‡. An example which ought to confound all young people, who have ordinarily ſo great a repugnance to ſubmiſſion. What a ſhame is this for you, *Theotime*, when you are wanting to the great reſpect you

* S. Ireneus l. 2. adverſus Hæreſes, c. 39. † Exod. xxv. 40. ‡ Luc. ii. 51.

you owe them from whom you receive life and inſtruction, having before your eyes the example of God *, who obeys his creatures? And what reply will you give to the ſon of God concerning your diſobedience, when he ſhall remind you, that he was pleaſed to be ſubject and obedient for your example?

The fourth thing that the goſpel teaches us of the youth of our Lord is, that *he increaſed in wiſdom, and age, and grace with God and men* †. Which is not to be underſtood of an interior increaſe of theſe two perfections in the ſon of God; becauſe from the moment of his conception he was poſſeſſed of them in a perfect fulneſs. But this is to be underſtood as to the effects he made to appear in his divine actions from day to day. As the ſun, which although it be as much adorned with light at its riſing as at mid-day, is ſaid to become more bright according to the degrees it riſes, becauſe its light appears with more brightneſs to our eyes. But the goſpel has made this obſervation, to teach Chriſtian youth what great care they ought to employ their years, in order to increaſe in wiſdom and virtue, and to avoid that ſo univerſal a fault of the greateſt part, who ſeem to advance in age to no other end than to diminiſh in innocence. It is a misfortune infinitely to be deplored, to ſee that children ſhould be corrupted in proportion as they grow up, and that their age ſhould ſerve for nothing elſe but to learn vice, lying, impurity, pride, diſobedience, diſſoluteneſs, as St. *Auguſtine* takes notice of himſelf ‡, Children of *Jeſus Chriſt*, is it thus that you imitate your maſter? He made himſelf a child like you, to invite you more ſweetly to his imitation, and to teach you to employ your firſt years in the increaſe of virtue, and you miſerably loſe them in learning vice. Caſt your eyes upon this divine pattern, to reform by it the abuſes of your youth, which you have committed, and learn to increaſe in all Chriſtian virtues, which is, to be the diſciple and child of *Jeſus Chriſt*. Which that you may perfectly underſtand, I ſhall here repreſent them one after another.

## CHAP. II.

### *Of the fear of God.*

THE firſt virtue that is neceſſary for you, is the fear of God; it is that which next to faith is the baſis and groundwork of all



* St. Bernard Hom. 1. ſuper miſſus eſt. † Luc. ii. 52. ‡ L. 7. conf. c. 1.

all others. The ſcripture calls it *The beginning of wiſdom;* and it teacheth us, that it is the firſt thing which ought to be inſpired into young ſouls. For this reaſon *Solomon* inſtructing youth in his *Proverbs*, begins his inſtruction with this excellent precept, ſo often repeated in ſcripture, *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wiſdom**. And the ſame ſcripture, in the hiſtory of holy *Tobias*, obſerves expreſly, that having a child, *From his infancy he taught him to fear God, and to abſtain from all ſin*†.

By this fear we muſt not underſtand a groſs and ſervile fear, that ſtands in awe of nothing but the puniſhment, which it apprehends more than the offence; but a reſpectful fear, by which, conſidering the greatneſs and majeſty of God, his ſanctity, his power, his juſtice, we conceive a profound reſpect, and apprehend above all things to fall by mortal ſin into the diſpleaſure of a God ſo great, ſo holy, ſo powerful, ſo juſt. We already ſpoken of it above, in Part II. Chap. I.

*What this fear is.*

This, *Theotime*, is the fear of God, which is the beginning of wiſdom, and the foundation of true piety. It is this to which I exhort you here, and which you ſhould chiefly aim to acquire.

*Practice of the fear of God.*

1. Beg it daily of God, who is the author of it: ſay to him frequently from the bottom of your heart, *Pierce thou my fleſh with thy fear, for I am afraid of thy judgments*‡.

1. *Beg it.*

2. Conceive an awful reſpect for the majeſty of God. He is the ſovereign Lord of all things, infinite in all his perfections, in majeſty, in wiſdom, in goodneſs, in power, in juſtice. All creatures adore him, the angels themſelves tremble at the ſight of his immenſity. All that is great in the world is but an atom in his ſight, and as he has created all things by one word, ſo he could deſtroy them all in a moment. *There is none like to thee, O Lord; thou art great, and great is thy name in might. Who ſhall not fear thee, O King of nations*§.

2. *Have a great ſenſe of the greatneſs of God.*

3. Fear above all things to diſpleaſe God, and let that be the firſt and principal thing you regard in all your actions, whether God be not therein offended.

3. *Fear to diſpleaſe God by ſin.*

4. When

* Prov. i. 7. † Tob. i. 10. ‡ Pſalm cxviii. 20. § Jer. x. 6. 7.

4. When you ſpeak of God, never ſpeak of him but with a profound reſpect: and endeavour to cauſe by your example, that he never be ſpoken of otherwiſe in your preſence.

4. *Speak of God with reſpect.*

## CHAP. III.

### *Of the love of God.*

IF the greatneſs of God oblige us to fear and honour him with a profound reſpect, his goodneſs engages us as much to love him. We muſt fear God by reaſon of his greatneſs, which renders him infinitely adorable; and we muſt love him becauſe of his goodneſs, which makes him infinitely amiable; we muſt not ſeparate theſe two virtues fear and love. *The fear of God is the beginning of his love**. And love is the perfection of fear. *He that is without fear cannot be juſtified*†. *He that loveth not abideth in death*‡.

*The love of God ought to be joined with fear.*

We muſt then love God, dear *Theotime*; for how can it be that you ſhould not love goodneſs itſelf, and him who hath loved you firſt? But you muſt love him betimes, and from your tender years, you muſt begin that early which you muſt do all your life, and during all eternity. The love of God is our laſt end. God has placed you in this world for no other end than to love him; and that coming to know him for your Creator, you ſhould render that which a work owes to its workman, a creature to its Creator, a child to his father, that is, love. And to induce you the better thereunto, he has added all imaginable favours, having deſigned you for the enjoyment of his kingdom in heaven, redeemed you when you were loſt, and redeemed you by the death of his only ſon, called you to the grace of Chriſtianity, enlightened you with faith, ſanctified you by his grace, received you often into his mercy, and replaced you among his children, after you had grievouſly offended him; and a thouſand other bleſſings has he beſtowed upon you. *Theotime*, how is it poſſible not to love a God who has loved you ſo much!

*We muſt begin betimes to love God.*

*We are created for that end.*

*And obliged thereto.*



* Eccli. xxv. 16. † Eccli. i. 28. ‡ 1 Jo. iii. 14.

*Two motives of the love of God.*

There are two things in God for which he ought to be beloved. The one is his goodneſs, which he manifeſts unto us by all the favours and bleſſings he beſtows upon us. The other is the goodneſs he poſſeſſes in himſelf, which makes him tranſcendently amiable. For, if we might ſuppoſe a thing impoſſible, *viz.* that God had never ſhewed us any favour, yet he deſerves to be infinitely beloved, by reaſon of the ſovereign goodneſs, and infinite perfections he enjoys in himſelf, which render him infinitely amiable. When I ſay we muſt love God, I include a twofold love; the firſt, for the benefits he has beſtowed upon us, the ſecond in conſideration of his infinite goodneſs, which renders him ſo lovely, that in the love of his goodneſs conſiſts the eternal happineſs of both men and angels.

*The eſſential condition of the love of God.*

But take notice, *Theotime*, that the love of God, to be real, ought to have one very particular condition, which occurs not in any other love: for it does not ſuffice to love God as we love creatures, but we muſt love him above all things, that is, more than all creatures. *Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart**. That is, more than all other things; ſo that you love nothing above him, as there is nothing greater or more amiable than he; nor nothing equal to him, as there is nothing which can equal him.

*Wherein the love of God conſiſts.*

In a word, the love of God conſiſts in preferring God before all things; before the goods of the world, pleaſures, honours, friends, and life itſelf; ſo that you muſt be prepared never to love theſe things to the prejudice of the love you owe to God; and be reſolved rather to loſe them a thouſand times, than to be wanting to the obedience you are obliged to render unto him. It is in this preference of God before all things, wherein the eſſential point of the love of God conſiſts; a preference without which it is impoſſible to love God, or to be in the ſtate of ſalvation.

You muſt then labour early to acquire this ſo amiable a love, and this ſo neceſſary a preference, to engrave it deep in your heart: and to the end you be not deceived therein, by taking, as very many do, apparent love for the real, ſee the principal acts you muſt practiſe therein, by which you may know whether you love God truly or no.

*The practice of the love of God.*

1. Above

* Luke x. 27.

1. Above all things fear, and have a horror of sin, because it is displeasing to God, and infinitely opposite to his goodness, and be resolved never to commit a sin upon any account whatsoever. 1. *Have a horror for sin.*

2. Fly venial sins as much as possible, because they displease God; and although they destroy not his love, yet they diminish and weaken it, and dispose you to fall into mortal sin. 2. *Avoid venial sins.*

3. Labour to acquire the virtues so necessary for you, and which he requires of you. It is the property of love, to desire to please him whom one loves. If you love God, dear *Theotime*, you will be careful not only to preserve yourself in his holy grace by avoiding sin, but you will endeavour to acquire those virtues you know will make you most acceptable to him. 3. *Labour to acquire virtue.*

4. Often in your heart and with your lips form acts of the love of God; wish often that God be served and loved as he deserves. Be troubled when you see him offended; hinder it as much as you can; and endeavour by your words and example to move others to love him. 4. *Advance the service of God.*

5. Begin from your youth to love him whom you must never cease to love. At what time soever you begin to love him, it will be always too late, and you will always have reason to express that grief which St. *Augustine* did; "I have loved thee too late, O "ancient beauty, I have loved thee too late, O eternal goodness *." Beg of him frequently the grace to love him as you ought, and daily say to him from your heart those excellent words of *David*: O God, *what have I in heaven? And besides thee what do I desire upon earth? Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion for ever*†. 5 *Begin betimes to love God.*

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## CHAP. IV.

### *Of the love of parents.*

HE *that feareth the Lord*, says the wise man, *honoureth his parents, and will serve them as his masters that brought him into the*

* Conf. lib. 10. cap. 27. † Ps. lxxii. 25, 26.

*the world**. Yes, *Theotime*, if you have the fear of God in your heart, you will honour your parents, and all those to whom he has given authority over you, because it is his will and command. *Honour thy father and thy mother.* And if you honour them not, you have neither the fear nor love of God.

*The fear of God makes us honour our parents.*

For to contemn a duty, which nature herself dictates, and which God has so strictly commanded, is not to have the fear of God. There is no menace which he has not denounced against those children who are wanting to this duty. He says, *He that afflicteth his father, and chaseth away his mother, is infamous and unhappy*†. *He that curseth his father and mother, his lamp shall be put out in the midst of darkness*‡. *The eye that mocketh at his father, and that despiseth the labour of his mother in bearing him, let the ravens of the brooks pick it out, and the young eagles eat it*§. *Of what an evil fame is he that forsaketh his father: and he is cursed of God that angereth his mother*¶. I wish these menaces were deeply engraven in the minds of all children, who forget ever so little their duty towards their parents.

*The severity of the Old Testament.*

Add to these threats the rigorous law God had established in the Old Testament against wicked children.

*If a man* (says the law) *have a stubborn and unruly son, who will not hear the commandments of his father or mother, and being corrected, slighteth obedience: they shall take him and bring him to the ancients of his city, and to the gate of judgment, and shall say to them: This our son is rebellious and stubborn, he slighteth hearing our admonitions, he giveth himself to revelling and to debauchery, and banquetings: the people of the city shall stone him: and he shall die, that you may take away the evil out of the midst of you, and all Israel hearing it may be afraid*‖.

This is the severe law God established against rebellious children. And although it be no longer in force, yet they ought no less to fear his wrath and vengeance, whereof but too many effects daily appear, by the visible punishments which he inflicts sooner or later upon children who fail in so holy and inviolable a duty. This sin is one of those which God commonly punishes in this life; and there are scarce any wicked children whom some punishment from God

* Eccli. iii. 8. † Prov. xix. 26. ‡ Prov. xx. 20. § Prov. xxx. 10, ¶ Eccli. iii. 18. ‖ Deut. xxi. 18, 19, 20, 21.

God does not befal in this life, which is often the beginning of an eternal chaſtiſement.

But let us leave theſe motives of terror and fear to ſtubborn and obſtinate children, who are not to be moved to their duty by reaſon and love; as for you, *Theotime*, who wiſh to ſerve God with all your heart, theſe menaces are not neceſſary; and to perſuade you to render to your parents all the reſpect you owe them, it ſuffices to tell you, that it is highly reaſonable, and the will of God. Theſe are the two motives by which the Apoſtle St. *Paul* convinced children of this great obligation. *Children*, ſays he, *obey your parents in the Lord; for this is juſt**. *Children, obey your parents in all things; for this is well-pleaſing to the Lord*†. Render then to your parents, *Theotime*, the honour you owe them, conſidering, 1. That it is juſt and reaſonable; 2. That God will have it ſo: God, I ſay, whoſe will ought to be the rule of our actions, and whoſe command is the moſt powerful motive to a generous ſoul.

*Children owe four things to their parents.*

The honour you ought to give to your parents includes four principal things, which you owe them, *viz.* reſpect, love, obedience, and aſſiſtance.

1. *Reſpect.*

1. Bear them great reſpect, conſidering them as thoſe from whom next to God you have received your being. Never deſpiſe them upon any conſideration whatſoever; either interiorly, by any thought of contempt; or exteriorly, by any words or diſreſpectful behaviour. Receive with good will their inſtructions, admonitions, and reprimands. *My ſon*, ſays the wiſe man, *hear the inſtruction of thy father, and forſake not the law of thy mother*‡. *A fool laugheth at the inſtruction of his father, but he that regardeth reproofs ſhall become more prudent*§.

2. *Love.*

2. Entertain an affectionate love for them. *Remember*, ſays the wiſe man, *that thou hadſt not been born but through them; and make a return to them*¶. Now this can only be done by loving them. Yet take notice, that this love muſt not only be a natural and ſenſible love; it muſt alſo be a rational love, and according to God. To love them according to God, you muſt love them becauſe God commands it, and as he commands it, that is, in ſuch a manner that you love principally their ſpiritual good and ſalvation, and endeavour to procure it by your prayers, and all other means which lie in your power.

Shew

* Eph. vi. 1. † Col. iii. 20. ‡ Prov. i. 8. § Prov. xv. 5. ¶ Eccli. vii. 30.

3. *Obedience.* Shew a ready obedience to them, as holding the place of God: yet only as St. *Paul* adviſes, *in the Lord**, becauſe ſuch is his will; for it is God who commands you to obey them, and when you obey them you obey God; as on the contrary, not obeying them you diſobey God, except they command any thing againſt the honour of God, or your good; for in theſe two caſes you owe them no obedience. Nevertheleſs, you muſt be very diſcreet on ſuch an occaſion, and procure the beſt advice, that you may not be deceived.

*Aſſiſtance.* 4. You muſt aſſiſt them in their neceſſities, in ſickneſs, poverty, old age, and generally in all their temporal and ſpiritual neceſſities. To forſake them on ſuch occaſions is a very great crime, which cries to God for vengeance †.

In ſhort, *Theotime*, to keep yourſelf always within the bounds of your duty towards your parents, ſet often before your eyes two very contrary examples. Reflect on wretched *Abſalom*, who having violated in all manner of ways the duty of a child towards his father, met at laſt with the juſt chaſtiſement of his crime, in the dreadful and miſerable death, we have related above. On the other ſide, conſider often the admirable example not of a man, but of the Son of God himſelf, who becoming incarnate, and made man for our ſalvation, would be ſubject and obedient to his moſt holy mother and St. *Joſeph*, until the age of thirty years ‡. He who was the ſovereign maſter of all things, to teach by his example all children the honour they ought to render to their parents, and how highly criminal it is for wretched man to refuſe obeying them, from whom he has received his life or education, when the God of heaven and earth humbled himſelf ſo far as to obey her from whom he was pleaſed to receive his temporal being.

*Two contrary examples.*

## CHAP. V.

*Of other perſons whom youth ought to honour.*

NEXT to your parents there are other perſons you ought particularly to honour.

1. You muſt honour thoſe who repreſent them, your tutors, and thoſe who have a charge of your perſon; your elder brothers and ſiſters, for to them there is a reſpect due.

2. Your

* Eph. vi. 1. † Eccluſ. iii. 14. ‡ Luke ii.

2. Your maſters, whether private or public, from whom you receive inſtruction in virtue and learning. You ought to honour them by ſo much more, as they repreſent your parents, and as the benefits you receive from them, ſuch as virtue and knowledge (the ornaments of the mind) far ſurpaſs all worldly riches. And as you owe to your parents reſpect, love, obedience, and aſſiſtance; you owe alſo to your maſters reſpect, love, obedience, and gratitude.

3. You owe a ſpecial honour to your ſpiritual maſters, ſuch as your paſtor, and all thoſe who inſtruct you in the way of ſalvation, and chiefly your ghoſtly father *; reſpect him much, regarding him as an officer of God; love him as the miniſter of your ſalvation, obey him and follow his advice, in which young people are often very defective.

4. Honour all the perſons that are venerable, either for dignity, as prieſts, whom the ſcripture commands you to honour †, or for their age, as old men, to whom young people ſhould ſhew much reſpect ‡, or for their virtue: for if you honour God, you will alſo honour them who ſerve him: and laſtly men in public authority, as the king §, and magiſtrates, whom God commands you to honour, as repreſenting his place, and whom he has eſtabliſhed for his miniſters in the temporal government of mankind. To the firſt is due obedience and fidelity, as the ſovereign and God's repreſentative on earth; the ſame is likewiſe due to his miniſters, in proportion to the rank and authority they hold under the prince ‖.

## CHAP. VI.

### *Of tractableneſs.*

*Tractableneſs neceſſary.*

THIS is one of the firſt, and chief virtues of youth, which being blind, ſubject to many faults, and not able to conduct itſelf, is under an abſolute neceſſity of being guided by others more knowing, and ſubmitting itſelf to their conduct; and this ſubmiſſion is called tractableneſs.

*What it is.*

It is a virtue which makes us love, willingly receive, ſearch after, and put in practice the inſtructions, counſels, reprimands, and exhortations

* Heb. xiii. 17. † Eccli. vii. 33. ‡ Levit. xix. 32. 1 Pet. v. 5. § Prov. xxiv. 21. 1 Pet. ii. 17. ‖ Rom. xiii. 1.

tations to good. O what an excellent virtue, *Theotime*, is this, which we may call the ornament of youth, the inſtrument of good education, the mother of all virtues in young perſons, the ſource of all good, the cauſe of their ſalvation! A tractable mind is capable of all good, as an untractable mind is ſubject to all wickedneſs. *Solomon*, in the beginning of his reign, having received from God a permiſſion to aſk whatever he pleaſed, with full aſſurance of obtaining it, he begged in the firſt place, that the Lord would *give* him *an underſtanding heart*, or docile mind *. For though the greateſt favour he ſought for, was the gift of wiſdom, for his aſſiſtance in governing himſelf and his ſubjects, yet he began his prayer with aſking a tractable diſpoſition, which he eſteemed a neceſſary means for acquiring that wiſdom he aſked of God. Imitate O *Theotime*, this young and wiſe prince: aſk it often of God; and when you beſeech him to give you wiſdom and virtue (which ought to be daily) aſk for this docility of mind, without which the other cannot be obtained, and endeavour on your part to acquire ſo deſirable a perfection, by thoſe means we have aſſigned in Chap. III. Part III.

*Its recommendations.*

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## CHAP. VII.

### *Of obedience.*

*Obedience neceſſary.* OBedience is the daughter of tractableneſs: a tractable mind renders itſelf obedient to the will of thoſe who have any authority over it. It is a fundamental virtue neceſſary for youth, without which one can never arrive at ſolid piety; which made the wiſe man ſay, that *The mind of the juſt will meditate obedience*†; becauſe it is a moſt neceſſary and effectual means of acquiring virtue, to which it aſpires.

It is not only neceſſary for youth, but alſo ſo ſuitable to that age, that it is appropriated, and as it were natural to it. A diſobedient child is a kind of monſter; and an ancient author numbering up the diſorders found in the world, puts in the third rank *a diſobedient child*, which he ſays is a diſorder bringing many others after it‡.

Love

* 3 Kings iii. 9. † Prov. xv. 28. ‡ De 12. abuſionibus ſæculi apud Cyprian.

Love then, *Theotime*, this virtue so agreeable to your age, and otherwise so necessary, and efficacious towards rendering you really virtuous all the rest of your life. Obey humbly and willingly your parents, your masters, and all those who have authority over you. *Practice.*

I say, obey humbly and willingly; because it is not enough to obey, but you must obey well; a constrained obedience, yielded unwillingly through fear or force, is a slavish obedience, which has no merit, nor any shadow of virtue.

True obedience proceeds from a sense of one's duty, and a desire of pleasing God in performing it. The first makes it humble, the second makes it voluntary, prompt, and easy.

You must obey thus, if you desire your obedience should be virtuous and pleasing to God. And by obeying thus, you learn in good time not to do your own will, but that of others. Self-conceit is the usual cause of the destruction of men, and chiefly of young persons, is an ill guide, which leads them into precipices, and makes them fall into many misfortunes. The wise man says, *An obedient man shall speak of victory* *. If you are obedient in your tender age, you will recount one day the victories you have gained over your most dangerous enemy, your own will; you will know how useful this virtue was and praise God for it all your life.

## CHAP. VIII.

### *Of chastity.*

TRactableness and obedience hinder the disorders of the mind, and chastity those of the body.

It is a virtue which entirely flies the pleasures of the flesh, and studies to stifle the thoughts, desires, and sense of unclean delights, because they displease God. *What chastity is.*

It is necessary for all men, but particularly for young persons, who being more susceptible of immodest pleasures, have a most particular need of this virtue. *How necessary.*

But as there is no age for which it is more necessary than for youth, so there is none to which it is more suitable and advantageous. I wish, *Theotime*, that you, and all those of your age, could *How suitable.*

com-

* Prov. xxi. 28.

comprehend the beauty of this virtue, with the ornament and advantage it brings.

*It makes them like angels.*

If chaſtity renders men like angels, becauſe it makes them imitate the purity of the angels in a frail body: it is chiefly in young perſons where this effect is found, becauſe their age being leſs corrupted by ſin, their chaſtity approaches nearer to the purity of thoſe celeſtial ſpirits.

*And martyrs.*

If chaſtity does partake ſomething of the glory of martyrdom, according to St. *Jerome**, by reaſon of the rude combats it ſuſtains, which ſometimes are not inferior to torments: it is chiefly to the chaſtity of young perſons to whom this glory appertains, becauſe the combats they ſuffer are ordinarily more violent and more frequent than thoſe of others; which made St. *Bernard* ſay, "that beſides the "martyrdom which is undergone by the effuſion of blood, there "are yet three others, that is, frugality practiſed in plenty, where- "of *David* and *Job* ſhewed a pattern; liberality in poverty, ex- "erciſed by *Tobias*, and the widow in the Goſpel; and chaſtity "in youth, preſerved by *Joſeph* in *Egypt*†."

Thoſe excellent commendations of chaſtity, wherein it is called "the flower and ornament of manners, the honour of the body, "the groundwork of ſanctity, the preſage of all ſorts of virtues‡," chiefly belong to youth: For it is true, that chaſtity in young perſons is a great foundation for virtue, and all manner of good may be expected from a chaſte youth: becauſe, as the ſpirit of God cannot dwell in impure hearts, ſo it takes delight to inhabit chaſte ſouls, and to heap upon them all ſorts of favours.

*Ruffinus* recounts to this purpoſe, that St. *Gregory* of *Nazianzen* being yet young, had a viſion of two ladies, who appeared to him glorioufly beautiful; and as the chaſte young man was uneaſy at their preſence, they ſaid to him, "Young "man, let not our preſence afflict you; we are two ſiſters well "known to you, the one of us is called *wiſdom*, the other *chaſtity*; "we are come to viſit you, becauſe you have prepared an agree- "able habitation for us in your ſoul."

Thus chaſtity is inſeparable from wiſdom, and attracts the divine grace and benediction upon young ſouls adorned with it.

Study

* Ep. ad Demetr. † S. Bern. in ſententiis. ‡ S. Cyprian de bono pudicitiæ.

Study then, *Theotime*, to obtain this amiable virtue, which you ought to eſteem the ornament and happineſs of your youth; you will find the means of acquiring it, and preſerving it, in Part III. Chap. VIII. Now as to the practice of this virtue, remember that it may be violated many ways, by thoughts, by words, by deſires, and by diſhoneſt actions; to be chaſte therefore, you muſt be ſo not only in actions, but in thoughts, deſires, and words. *Follow peace with all men and holineſs, without which no man ſhall ſee God* :* where by holineſs is underſtood chaſtity as St. *Jerome* and St *Chryſoſtom* obſerve. *Practice.*

## CHAP. IX.

### *Of baſhfulneſs.*

AS trees, in producing their fruit, produce at the ſame time leaves to preſerve them againſt the injuries of the air; ſo charity, producing chaſtity in a ſoul, brings forth alſo baſhfulneſs, to preſerve it from every thing that may hurt it. It is impoſſible to have chaſtity without baſhfulneſs, which is of ſingular uſe, and highly neceſſary for the preſervation of chaſtity.

Chaſtity abhors the thoughts, deſires, and ſenſe of unclean pleaſures, as we have ſaid: and baſhfulneſs removes all thoſe exterior things which may be either the cauſe or effects of theſe thoughts, deſires, *&c.* as immodeſt words, unchaſte looks, laſcivious geſtures, kiſſes, and all other things which may in the leaſt offend chaſtity. Baſhfulneſs then is a virtue which ſets all theſe things at a diſtance, and which cannot permit them either in ones ſelf or others, without bluſhing at them, as St. *Ambroſe* remarks†. Now this virtue agrées particularly with youth. *Wherein it conſiſts.*

For, as St. *Bernard* obſerves very well, although we ought to aim in every age at this virtue, which is the ornament of all ages, yet it ſhines with greater brilliancy in youth. " What is there " more amiable," ſays he, " than a modeſt young man? How beau- " tiful and rich an ornament is baſhfulneſs in the life and counte- " nance of a young man? What an aſſured ſign of future moſt " hopeful diſpoſitions? There is not a more apparent mark of " chaſte ſimplicity, nor a more evident teſtimony of pure inno- " cence.



* Heb. xii. 14. † 1 Off. 18.

" cence. It is the lamp of a chaſte ſoul, perpetually ſhining, " whereby it no ſooner diſcovers the leaſt indecency, than it de- " clares its abhorrence. And thus it baniſhes ſin from the ſoul, " and preſerves purity. It is the glory of the conſcience, the " guardian of honour, the ornament of life, the ſeat of wiſdom " and piety, the firſt-fruits of virtue, the honour of nature, and " the mark of all purity *." Weigh well theſe commendations one after another, and judge of the eſteem you ought to have for this excellent virtue.

The vice oppoſite to this virtue is impudence and boldneſs, which bluſhes at nothing. It is a vice as odious in young men, as baſhfulneſs is amiable. It is the ſign and effect of a wicked diſpoſition, and it is no leſs the origin of many ſins, than baſhfulneſs is the mother of many virtues.

*Practice.* Endeavour to acquire this excellent virtue, *Theotime;* and abhor not only the ſins of impurity, but whatſoever may lead to, or in the leaſt wound this virtue, as all truly chaſte ſouls do. It is reported of St. *Bernard*, that his baſhfulneſs was ſo great *Example.* in his younger years, that when any one chanced to ſpeak an indecent word in his preſence, he bluſhed as if he had received a box on the ear: you will find the practice of this virtue before in Part III.

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## CHAP. X.

### *Of modeſty.*

*Wherein it conſiſts.* NEXT to baſhfulneſs, modeſty is alſo abſolutely neceſſary for young people. Baſhfulneſs has for its object the removing all exterior things contrary to chaſtity, which it does not permit either in itſelf or others. And modeſty excludes whatſoever appears diſorderly or indecent in the exterior of the perſon, as in the eyes, gait, behaviour, dreſs, words, where wantonneſs is a ſign and an effect of an abandoned diſpoſition.

*The mark of a wiſe and virtuous mind.* This virtue is the more to be wiſhed for in a young man, as it is a certain mark of interior virtue, of wiſdom and piety. The mind is known by the actions, and the wiſdom of a man by his exterior. *The wiſdom* (ſays the wiſe man) *of a man ſhineth*

* S. Bern. Serm. ult. in Can.

*ſhineth in his countenance*. A man is known by his look, and a wiſe man, when thou meeteſt him, is known by his countenance. The attire of the body, and the laughter of the teeth, and the gate of a man ſhew what he is†.* Which made St. *Ambroſe* ſay‡, that "the diſpoſition "of the mind is known by the poſture of the body, and that the "exterior motion is a kind of voice by which the mind diſcovers "itſelf."

So that, *Theotime*, if you have a wiſe and well-regulated mind, it will appear by the modeſty of your exterior behaviour; but if you be looſe in your carriage, it is a certain ſign that you have a light, ill-governed, indiſcreet mind, incapable of any ſerious thought, and which permits itſelf to be carried away with vain and impertinent imaginations. Such outward miſbehaviour is a bad ſign at preſent, and a ſtrong preſage of your future ill conduct.

*Remarkable example.*

St. *Gregory* of *Nazianzen*, in his fourth oration againſt *Julian* the apoſtate, relates, that having ſtudied with him at *Athens* in his youth, he prognoſticated that he would be very wicked, ſeeing the indecency and diſorder of his carriage. "One "might ſee in him many things that foreboded nothing good; "a head always moving, a wandering and furious eye, his feet "never without motion, a haughty look, an inſolent laughter, a "confuſed ſpeech; you might hear him aſk many impertinent "queſtions, and give more fooliſh anſwers: In ſhort (he ſays) I "judged from that time what he would be afterwards. And after "I had attentively conſidered him, I ſaid to many of my friends, "what a monſter the *Roman* empire is foſtering and breeding up "in this man§!"

*Practice.*

To practiſe well this virtue, ſo neceſſary for your age:

*Modeſty in exterior actions.*

1. Endeavour, as much as you can, that nothing indecent or light appear in your looks, gait, or geſture; have a ſerious, ſweet, and affable countenance, with an averſion to curioſity, and a modeſt carriage, the beſt marks of a good education. Study to be ſuch in all companies, and in all places; with ſuperiors, by reaſon of the reſpect you owe them; with your equals, or inferiors, becauſe you muſt give them edification and good example; even when you are alone, ſince you are always in the preſence of



* Eccleſ. viii. 1. † Eccli. xix. 26, 27. ‡ Lib. 1, Offic. 18. § Orat. 4. in Julian.

of God. A wife and well-regulated mind is always modeſt where ever he is; becauſe he is not modeſt to pleaſe men, which would be mere vanity, but to pleaſe God who ſees him. *Let your modeſty be known to all men*, ſays the Apoſtle, *the Lord is nigh* *.

*Modeſty in the church.*

2. Shew a particular modeſty in the church. It is the houſe of God, and a place appointed for prayer and his worſhip: you muſt enter there with great reſpect. *Keep thy foot*, ſays the wiſe man, *when thou goeſt into the houſe of God* †. You muſt remain there with a great modeſty, and in an humble and devout poſture, agreeable to the ſanctity of the place. To enter there as into a profane houſe, without reſpect or reſtraint; to continue there without modeſty, gazing about, ſpeaking without neceſſity, laughing with others; to be there in an indecent poſture, lolling upon the ſeats, kneeling upon one knee, and other like irreverences, are ſins which offend God more than the generality of people imagine. Judge by this, *Theotime*, what we muſt ſay of the open immodeſties committed in the church, by thoſe who are not aſhamed to carry their crimes into the midſt of the ſanctuary, and offend God in the place conſecrated to his worſhip. It is a crime which God deteſts much by the mouth of his prophet ‡. And St. *Auguſtine* in his confeſſions, among the ſins of his life, expreſſes a ſorrow for this as one of his greateſt, for which he declares he was puniſhed by God, though not according to his merit §.

*Decency in attire.*

3. Modeſty alſo regards dreſs, wherein you muſt avoid two things; ſuperfluous ornaments, which diſcover a vain and light mind; but much more, ſuch as ſerve to promote impurity. Be cloathed then modeſtly, accordingly to your condition, without ſeeking other ornaments than ſuch as decency permits. *Glory not in apparel at any time* ‖, (ſays the wiſe man) It is a vain and impertinent glory. St. *Jerome* ſays excellently well ¶. "That a Chriſtian ought not "to ſeek to be affectedly or too curiouſly clothed." But above all avoid the ornaments which may endanger chaſtity, whether in yourſelf or others. The ſame St. *Jerome* calls young people, who curl and trick up themſelves wantonly, "The peſts of modeſty." O *Theotime*, if you have a truly chaſte heart, you will fly all theſe ornaments, which can ſerve you to no good end, and which may much

* Phil. iv. 5. † Eccles. iv. 17. ‡ Sophonias i. 9. § L. 3. Confeſſ. ‖ Eccli. xi. 4. ¶ Ad Euſtoch.

much prejudice either you or thoſe who ſee you. " Chaſtity (ſays " St *Cyprian*) hath no other ornaments than modeſty; and ſhe ac- " counts herſelf to be ſufficiently beautiful, when ſhe diſpleaſeth " the wicked; ſhe ſeeks not to be adorned, being herſelf her own " ornament *."

To acquire this virtue of modeſty, be careful to practiſe theſe means. 1. Beg it often of God. 2. Be willing to be admoniſhed when you do any action which is not very modeſt, and procure a friend who may warn you of it. 3. When you hear another's immodeſty blamed, take notice of it as a precaution to yourſelf. 4. Converſe often with diſcreet and modeſt perſons, obſerve their modeſty for your own imitation. Fly the company of light minds, and of ſuch as are irregular in their outward behaviour.

*Means to acquire modeſty.*

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## CHAP. XI.

### *Of modeſty in words.*

MOdeſty conſiſts alſo in words. It is a great virtue, and principally in young men, to know how to ſpeak diſcreetly; for as the wiſe man ſays, *by the tongue wiſdom is diſcerned* †. Now, to ſpeak with diſcretion, two things are required. 1. To ſpeak nothing ill or impertinent. 2. To ſpeak properly at a fit time, that is, when and how one ought.

1. Never utter a wanton or indecent word. The Apoſtle St. *Paul* ‡, forbids Chriſtians ſo much as to name obſcene things, how much more to ſpeak of them with pleaſure, or danger to our neighbour. *He that ſpeaketh unjuſt things cannot be hid, neither ſhall the chaſtiſing judgment paſs him by* §. Fly as the plague, all unchaſte diſcourſe, the peſt and corruption of good manners, and which cauſes a vaſt number of ſins as well in the ſpeaker as in the hearer. Fly alſo all dubious expreſſions, or ſuch as carry with them a double ſenſe, which may give others occaſion of impure thoughts. And laſtly, avoid all indecent or ſcurrilous expreſſions, which men have ſo frequently in their mouths, and are not ſufferable amongſt the debauched, much leſs in you.

2. In good or indifferent diſcourſes be not too ready or haſty in ſpeaking, but hear before you ſpeak. There are ſome who are al-



* Lib. 1. de bono Pudic. † Eccli. iv. 29. ‡ Epheſ. v. 3. § Wiſd. i. 8.

ways the firſt in talking, and the laſt in holding their tongues; who meddle with every thing, interrupt others, and ſpeak of things they underſtand not. It is the ſign of an ill-bred, light, indiſcreet, and ſometimes of a proud mind. The wiſe man ſays excellently well, *Haſt thou ſeen a man haſty to ſpeak? Folly is rather to be looked for than his amendment* *.

To regulate well your ſpeech, ſee the maxims you muſt obſerve.

*Rules for ſpeaking.*

1. Speak little, and hear much. It is the beſt mark of a wiſe mind, to hearken to others, and ſpeak little. The ſcripture ſays, *he that ſetteth bounds to his words is knowing and wiſe* †. And that ſilence is ſo great a ſign of wiſdom, that *when it is found in a man of ſmall underſtanding, it makes him eſteemed diſcreet* ‡. I ſpeak not of a ſullen melancholy ſilence, which ſprings from ſtupidity and heavineſs; but of a wiſe ſilence, which modeſty directs, in order to give ear to others, and ſpeak in due ſeaſon.

*How we muſt behave in converſation.*

In converſation, when another ſpeaks, have a care of three things. 1. Not to ſpeak before you have heard what he ſays. 2. Not to interrupt him who ſpeaks. 3. Not to be haſty to talk, when ſomething you underſtand not what is ſpoken of.

Theſe are three precepts of the wiſe man: *Before thou hear anſwer not a word: and interrupt not others in the midſt of their diſcourſe* §. *Learn before thou ſpeak* ‖. *He that anſwereth before he heareth, ſheweth himſelf to be a fool, and worthy of confuſion* ¶.

When you ſhall be in honourable company, obſerve what the wiſe man directs you to do: *Young man, ſcarcely ſpeak in thy own cauſe. If thou be aſked twice, let thy anſwer be ſhort. In many things be as if thou wert ignorant.* And this not by diſſimulation, but by modeſty: *hear in ſilence, and withal ſeeking* **.

## CHAP. XII.

*Of other vices of the tongue, and particularly of ſwearing.*

BESIDES wicked and impertinent diſcourſe, and a vanity in talking, there are alſo many other vices of the tongue, which Chriſtian modeſty ought carefully to retrench; the firſt whereof is ſwearing. To

* Prov. xxix. 20. † Prov. xvii. 27. ‡ Prov. xvii. 28. Job xiii. 5. § Eccli. xi. 8. ‖ Eccli. xviii. 19. ¶ Eccli. xviii. 13. ** Eccli. xxxii. 10, 11, 12.

To be addicted to swearing is a very vicious quality, especially in young people. I speak not of oaths appointed by religion, to ascertain a truth when sufficient necessity requires it, a necessity which seldom happens to young persons; but of those oaths so common amongst Christians, where the adorable name of God is called upon and taken in vain, in the least anger or impatience, and sometimes deliberately, from a detestable custom of swearing by the name of God on all occasions.

This sin is one of the most fatal habits a man can contract: For,

1. It is a contempt of God, to respect so little his holy name, which all creatures adore, and whose sanctity makes all the angels to tremble; and this notwithstanding God's express prohibition: *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain* *.

2. It is a heinous outrage offered to his son *Jesus Christ*, to treat with so much irreverence the precious death he suffered for our redemption, and the adorable blood he shed for our salvation. An outrage which is no less than that he received by the cruelty of his executioners. "He was scourged (says St. *Austin*) with the "rods of the *Jews*, and he is now scourged by the blasphemous "tongues of wicked Christians. And they sin no less who blas- "pheme *Jesus Christ* reigning in heaven, than those who blaspheme "med him when he walked upon earth."

3. This vice causes many other sins to be committed: for besides that there is no sin multiplied like swearing when grown habitual, it draws the curse of God upon those who are accustomed to it, by which they are abandoned to their passions, and to the occasions of sin; for this reason the wise man said: *A man that sweareth much shall be filled with iniquity, and a scourge shall not depart from his house* †. *The cause of many sins.*

4. This vice is very hard to be corrected; though ever so little rooted; it increases still with age, and becomes at length past remedy, as those who are subject to it do daily experience. *Hard to be corrected.*

Lastly, it suffices to say, that this sin is the sin of the Devils, who are pleased in nothing but in abusing the holy name of God: And it is a horrible thing, that Christians, who ought to praise God upon earth, as the angels praise him in heaven, *The sin of the Devil.*



* Exod. xx. † Eccli. xxiii. 12.

ſhould offer him here the ſame injuries as the Devils throw out againſt him in hell.

*Blaſphemers puniſhment.*

O *Theotime*, fly this deteſtable ſin, abominable before God and men, odious in perſons of every age, but principally in youth*. Remember that the ancient law condemned blaſphemers to death, and St. *Paul* delivered over to the Devil two Chriſtians guilty of this crime; *That they may learn*, ſays he, *not to blaſpheme* †. And St. *Gregory* relates, "How a child accuſtomed "to ſwear in his impatience by the name of God, was ſeized with "a mortal diſtemper, and aſſaulted by evil ſpirits, which cauſed "him to depart this life in his father's arms, who being too in-"dulgent in correcting him, had bred up in this child a great "ſinner for hell, as the ſame ſaint obſerves‡."

*Remedy.*

The remedy of this ſin, when one has ever ſo little a habit or inclination to it, is to fly the cauſes, as anger, gaming, wicked company, and all other things, which every one knows to be to themſelves an occaſion of ſwearing. But above all, it is a powerful, and even neceſſary remedy, to impoſe upon one's ſelf ſome rigorous puniſhment every time he ſhall fall into this ſin; as ſome alms, ſome prayers to be performed the ſame day, ſome faſting to be obſerved ſoon after, or ſome other mortification.

Avoid every degree of oaths or imprecations, and other phraſes, which, though not oaths, tend to ſwearing upon occaſions. Chriſtian modeſty requires, that we ſhould not ſwear at all, according to that holy precept of our Saviour, *I ſay to you not to ſwear at all. But let your ſpeech be yea, yea; no, no: for whatſoever is more than theſe cometh of evil* §.

## *Of detraction.*

Detraction is another ſin of the tongue, which you ought not only to avoid, but abhor.

*What detraction is.*

To detract, is to report of another a ſin hurtful to his reputation, which he has not committed, or elſe a ſin which he has committed, but is not public; for as long as the ſin of our neighbour is ſecret, to reveal it to them who knew it not, is to do him an injury.

Detraction

* Levit. xxiv. 16. † 1 Tim. i. 20. ‡. L 4. Dialog. c. 18. § Mat. v. 34, 37.

Detraction is sometimes committed out of malice, as through hatred, revenge, envy, or with a design to hurt our neighbour. Sometimes by indiscretion and levity, and from an inclination one has to speak of the evil he has heard, or knows of another, which is too common amongst young people. *It is done two ways.*

Although the first manner of detraction be most criminal, the second nevertheless is not without sin, for it always takes away the reputation of our neighbour, it obliges to repair the honour he was deprived of: This forwardness in talking of others defects, is the result of a mind defective in charity or prudence, and often in both: for charity makes us conceal the faults of others, as we would have our own kept private; and prudence hinders us from speaking ill of another when to no good end, or without necessity.

Avoid this sin, *Theotime*, as a base thing, unworthy of a generous or truly Christian soul, and odious both to God and men. *The detractor*, says the wise man, *is the abomination to men* *. *It is odious to God and man.*

Be not therefore ready to speak of others defects, but keep them secret when you know them. The wise man says excellently well, *Hast thou heard a word against thy neighbour? let it die within thee* †; that is, let it go no farther. In fine, protect the honour of another, as you know it is dear to him, and as you desire he would protect yours.

Yet it is to be observed, that it is not detraction to speak of another's sin, when it is for his good, or to prevent the hurt of others, when one tells it to a discreet person, who can or ought to apply a remedy to it. On the contrary, it is always charity to do so; and there is frequently an obligation of conscience, and a very strict obligation, in which one is sometimes defective, out of fearfulness, or some vain pretence, which must be charged to the want of charity for the salvation of our neighbour, and which renders us guilty in the sight of God of the sins of others. *An important remark.*

*Of injuries and reproaches.*

Avoid all contentions, which are the causes of many evils: In debates which arise, avoid speaking injurious words, utter no reproaches

* Prov. xxiv. 9. † Eccli. xix. 10.

proaches or threats; as vile things, and unworthy of a virtuous ſoul. Call to mind, that to return injury for injury, reproach for reproach, is to waſh a ſpot with ink, and make it yet more black*; for it is to blot out an injury often only received in imagination, with a ſin which is frequently mortal: it is to defend your honour to the prejudice of your ſalvation; if that can be accounted defending your honour, which defends it by the ruin of another's credit. The ſpirit of Chriſtianity not only forbids doing an injury, but alſo the returning it to thoſe who firſt offer it you, according to thoſe excellent maxims of St. *Paul*, *Bleſs them that perſecute you: bleſs, and curſe not. Render to no man evil for evil. Revenge not yourſelves: but give place to wrath. Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good*†; that is, the ill which another does you, by the good you render him.

This, you will ſay, is very hard. 'Tis true, *Theotime*, therefore you muſt learn to practiſe it betimes. Theſe maxims are difficult to thoſe who are not inſtructed in their youth, and have not learned to live but according to the inclinations of nature; yet they are eaſy to thoſe who apply themſelves in good time to do the will of God, and live according to the ſpirit of his ſon *Jeſus Chriſt*, by imitating his example, and practiſing his maxims as a Chriſtian ought to do, otherwiſe he is only a Chriſtian in name, and not in reality.

### *Of ſowers of diſcord.*

Beware of another ſin of the tongue, which is but too common among young perſons, yet very prejudicial: it is to be the author of diſcord, by reports which are often made through indiſcretion, not foreſeeing the evil which may from thence ariſe, and ſometimes out of a bad deſign, to ſtir up diviſions and quarrels.

This ſin is great, and more heinous than is imagined; for it is the cauſe of many other ſins, and of all the ills which accompany quarrels. The wiſe man ſays, that God deteſts it: *Six things there are which the Lord hateth, and the ſeventh his ſoul deteſteth: him that ſoweth diſcord among brethren*‡.

*The whiſperer and the double-tongued is accurſed: for he hath troubled many that were at peace*§. *A ſinful man will trouble his friends, and bring in debate in the midſt of them that are at peace*‖. Yes, *Theotime*; for as peace and union proceed from God, diſcords and

* Eccli. xxiii. † Rom. xii. 14, 17, 19, 21. ‡ Prov. vi. 16, 19.
§ Eccli. xxviii. 15. ‖ Eccli. xxviii. 11.

and diſſenſions ſpring from the Devil. For this reaſon the Son of God in the goſpel ſays, that *peace-makers*, that is, thoſe who apply themſelves to procure or preſerve peace amongſt men, *are the children of God.* But if thoſe who cauſe peace are the children of God, " Then thoſe who diſturb it are the children of Satan *."

Fly this ſin, *Theotime*, becauſe it is moſt heinous and criminal, deteſted both by God and men. Keep a guard upon your words, to the end you may never cauſe any diſcord among others; above all be not the author of it through malice, or deliberate purpoſe. Conceive a horror of this vice, which can bring you nothing but inevitable ruin.

## *Of lying.*

There remains lying, which is not the leaſt conſiderable among the ſins of the tongue; and it is ſo much more important that you ſhould be ſolidly inſtructed on this ſubject, as it is frequent with young perſons, and infinitely pernicious when once become habitual.

A lie is always a ſin, becauſe it is always againſt truth, known to be ſuch by him who ſpeaks; and although it be not a mortal ſin, when it is not in a matter of conſequence, nevertheleſs the habit of lying, although lightly, is not a light thing, nor of ſmall importance.

*The vice it produces.*

A habit or cuſtom of lying opens a gate to an infinite number of other vices. A lying perſon will become a cheat and deceiver in his behaviour, double in his words, unfaithful in his promiſes, a hypocrite in his manners, a diſſembler in his actions, a flatterer, and faint-hearted when he ſhould ſpeak truth; bold and ſhameleſs to affirm lies, impudent to maintain them as certain truths, a ſwearer, detracter, miſtruſtful of every one; for as he is accuſtomed to lie, he believes that others always ſpeak falſe. A mind addicted to lying will eaſily be ſo in things of moment, and conſequently involved in heinous ſins.

*Very prejudicial to young-people.*

So that, *Theotime*, there are few vices more pernicious, and principally to youth, than this cuſtom of lying. For this reaſon, *Be not willing to make any manner of lie:*

*for*

* St. Greg. De cura paſtorali. 3tia pars.

*for the cuſtom thereof is not good**; that is, according to the expreſſion of the ſcripture, it is very bad.

In a word, it is ſo wicked a quality of the mind to be a liar, that the ſcripture ſpeaks of it in unuſual terms. It ſays, that *God abhors it;* that *lying lips are an abomination to the Lord*†; as, on the contrary, thoſe who love ſincerity in their words gain his friendſhip. *Thou*, O Lord, *wilt deſtroy all that ſpeak a lie*‡. Lying is infamous among men: *A lie is a foul blot in a man, and yet it will be continually in the mouth of men without diſcipline. A thief is better than a man that is always lying: but both of them ſhall inherit deſtruction* §.

*It makes men like Devils.*

Laſtly, This vice makes men reſemble the Devil, who is pleaſed with nothing more than lies. It was he who firſt invented it, and who is the father thereof, as the Son of God has named him with his own mouth¶.

St. *Auguſtine* ſays, "That as truth comes from God, lying "takes its origin from the Devil‖." And St. *Ambroſe* adds, "That "thoſe who love lying are the children of that deteſtable fiend, "for the children of God love truth**."

Fly entirely, *Theotime*, this pernicious vice in all occurrences, but chiefly in two.

1. When you ſpeak of a thing of importance, that is, when it prejudices your neighbour in his goods, honour, or eternal welfare, wherein you muſt be very cautious, and even more than in regard of yourſelf.

2. When you ſpeak to a perſon who has authority over you; for then a lie is a very culpable impoſture, as well by reaſon of the reſpect you then break through, as becauſe it frequently happens, that thoſe falſhoods notably prejudice your own good, or that of your neighbour, which you are obliged to promote when it is in your power.

Laſtly, in whatſoever matter it be, and to whatſoever perſon you ſpeak, accuſtom yourſelf never to tell a lie on purpoſe, or with reflection. Love truth and ſincerity in all your words. What an excellent quality is it in a young man, when he cannot tell an untruth without bluſhing! *The juſt*, ſays the wiſe man, *ſhall hate a lying word*††. Beg of God that he give you a hatred of this ſin, and frequently offer to him that prayer of *Solomon: Remove far from me vanity, and lying words*‡‡.

CHAP.

* Eccli. vii. 14. † Prov. xii. 22. ‡ Pſ. v. 7. § Eccli. xx. 26, 27. ¶ John viii. ‖ Tract. 42. in Job. ** Serm. de Dom. Paſſionis. †† Prov. xiii. 5. ‡‡ Prov. xxx. 8.

## CHAP. XIII.

### *Of Sobriety.*

YOung men exhort to be ſober*, ſays the Apoſtle St. *Paul to Titus* his diſciple. Sobriety, *Theotime*, in the judgment of this great Apoſtle, is neceſſary for youth: and although by this name of ſobriety he comprehends generally the moderation of the heat and impetuoſity of that age, which is naturally carried to an exceſs in all things; nevertheleſs he means alſo particularly moderation in eating and drinking, the contrary of which is very common in youth, and extremely prejudicial to them.

As ſobriety conſiſts in the moderation of eating and drinking, it has two vices to combat with, drunkenneſs and gluttony, both highly prejudicial to youth: for theſe two vices are declared enemies to good breeding, health, vigour of mind, and ſalvation. *Sobriety oppoſes two vices.*

There is nothing ſo unſeemly in young men, as to be ſubject to wine or gluttony. Diſcreet perſons have an averſion to this vice, both in themſelves and others.

We ſee by experience how wine and delicious meats prejudice the health, principally of young people; how the exceſs of the one or other cauſes diſtempers and infirmities, which often remain with them all their life, and bring them to their grave before their time; whereas, on the contrary, ſobriety perſerves health and life. *In many meats there will be ſickneſs, and greedineſs will turn to choler. By ſurfeiting many have periſhed: but he that is temperate ſhall prolong life*†.

As for the mind, who is there that does not know how theſe two vices are contrary to it? We daily ſee, that perſons addicted to gluttony become ſtupid, groſs, and carnal, according to the proverb cited by St. *Jerome*‡: "A fat belly never produces a "witty mind;" and thoſe who love drink become dull, brutiſh, and incapable of any good.

But as for thy ſalvation, *Theotime*, it is incredible how theſe two vices are hurtful to it; for beſides the ſins of intemperance, which are committed in the exceſs of eating and drinking, which are in great number, and frequently very enormous, theſe two vices cauſe a vaſt multitude of others; as anger, quarrels, ſwearing, blaſ- *It produces many ſins.*

* Tit. ii. 6. † Eccli. xxxvii. 33, 34. ‡ Ad Nepot.

blaſpheming, immodeſt diſcourſes *, and amongſt others the ſin of impurity, which intemperance enkindles in the heart, and particularly of young men, furniſhing continually new fuel to that fire of immodeſty, which concupiſcence and the heat of that age inceſſantly enflames. "It is very difficult (ſays St. *Jerome*) to preſerve "chaſtity in the midſt of banquets; and wine joined with youth "makes a double inflammation of pleaſure †."

To fly entirely theſe two vices, and to acquire and preſerve ſobriety, you are to obſerve three things in eating and drinking, quantity, quality, and modeſty.

As for the quantity, have a care never to commit any exceſs either in the one or the other, keeping yourſelf always as much as you can within the bounds of ſufficiency and decency. It is the property of carnal and ill-inſtructed minds, to eat without meaſure and rule, and to fill themſelves with meat without any reſtraint.

In the quality there are three things to be avoided; delicious meats, prejudicial to health, and ſuch as provoke impurity, as all hot ſpiced meats, and wine, which St. *Jerome* ſays, "Is poiſon to "youth, and the firſt means the Devil makes uſe of to tempt them "to uncleanneſs ‡."

As for modeſty in meals, to eat with greedineſs, to devour all the table with one's eyes, to ſeek to pleaſe one's palate, to ſpeak of nothing but ſweet bits, to be the firſt in eating, and the laſt in leaving off, are things abſolutely inconſiſtent with decency and temperance: the wiſe man gives you very oppoſite precepts.

*Art thou ſet at a great table? be not the firſt to open thy mouth upon it. Say not: there are many things which are upon it. Stretch not out thy hand firſt, leſt being diſgraced with envy thou be put to confuſion. Be not haſty in a feaſt. Uſe as a frugal man the things that are ſet before thee: leſt if thou eateſt much, thou be hated. Leave off firſt, for manners ſake, and exceed not, leſt thou offend* §. You muſt pay great attention to theſe precepts of temperance, ſince they come from the Holy Ghoſt himſelf.

In ſhort, *Theotime*, be careful not to frequent the company of thoſe who are addicted to wine and gluttony; according to the counſel of the ſame wiſe man ¶, fly the places deſtined to that uſe, as taverns: eſpecially if you be inclined to intemperance, uſe all your endeavours to reſtrain and correct it, by calling to mind that *he that loves good cheer, ſhall be in want: he that loves wine and fat things ſhall not be rich* ‖. He means principally the riches of the mind, which are wiſdom and virtue.

Beſeech

* Eccli. xxxi. † Lib. 2. Ep. 9. ‡ Ep. ad Furian. § Eccli. xxxi. 12, 13, 16, 17, 19, 20. ¶ Prov. xxiii. 20. ‖ Prov. xxiv. 17.

Beſeech God to take away from you all affection to theſe ſenſual and carnal things, which never ſatisfy, and ſerve only to pamper that body, which God will one day deſtroy, and which will become meat for worms*: ſuch things render the mind brutiſh, uncapable of reliſhing what is heavenly †, and of entertaining ſerious thoughts of ſalvation ‡.

## CHAP. XIV.

### *Of meekneſs in oppoſition to anger.*

AS young men are extremely addicted to ſenſuality, ſo they are exceſſively impatient under the leaſt contradiction. Theſe two predominant paſſions of youth, precipitate them into all kinds of diſorder. Take a view of all the vices and extravagances of youth, conſider all the misfortunes that befal them, and you will find they ſpring from one of theſe two cauſes, either from the love of pleaſures, or from anger, and often from both together. Theſe are the two means the Devil employs to deſtroy young men, being well aſſured, that if one ſucceeds not, the other will never fail. It is frequently ſeen, that he ruins by anger thoſe he cannot gain by pleaſures, hurrying them by that impetuous paſſion into moſt deplorable misfortunes. *Two vices that bear ſway in young perſons.*

Wherefore, *Theotime*, as it is moſt important for you to moderate this love of pleaſures, ſo natural to your age, of which we have hitherto ſpoken; ſo it is neceſſary for you to labour to repreſs thoſe motions of anger, according to that excellent precept the wiſe man gives you; *Remove anger from thy heart, and put away evil from thy fleſh*, that is to ſay, pleaſure §.

There are ſo many reaſons that induce us to fly anger, that it is truly ſurpriſing to ſee it ſo common among men. I beſeech you, *Theotime*, weigh attentively theſe which follow. *Powerful reaſons to fly anger.*

1. Anger is a brutiſh paſſion, which renders men like beaſts: for what is there liker a brute, than a man who cannot ſuffer the leaſt thing? Beaſts fly at every thing that hurts them, becauſe they have no reaſon; and if you ſtir up yourſelf againſt every thing that diſpleaſes you, in what are you different from a beaſt? and what does your reaſon avail you?

2. Anger

* 1 Cor. vi. 13. † 1 Cor. ii. 14. ‡ Luke xxi. 34. § Eccleſ. xi. 10.

2. Anger uſually proceeds from a want of wiſdom, or from a weakneſs of mind, which can ſuffer or diſſemble nothing, and diſcerns not the things which deſerve anger, from thoſe which do not. If then you be inclined to anger, you betray a weak mind, and more folly than diſcretion. This is the judgment of the wiſe man, who ſays, *A fool immediately ſheweth his anger* *: He therefore gives you this excellent admonition, *be not quickly angry: for anger reſteth in the boſom of a fool* †: that is, anger is ſuitable and natural to ill-bred minds.

3. Anger clouds the judgment and reaſon, and renders a man incapable of diſcerning good from bad, true from falſe, uſeful from unprofitable. It makes one frequently take the one for the other, ſo that a man in anger has nothing but the exterior ſhape and figure of a man.

4. The exterior itſelf is in ſuch a manner changed, that it diſfigures a man; his eyes ſtrike fire, his countenance pale, his ſpeech interrupted, his body trembling, his clamours, and other like alterations, are the effects of anger, which makes a man as it were outragious.

5. From thence it comes, that a man in anger is inſupportable to all the world, every one dreads and abandons him, even his friends fly from him. *A ſpirit that is eaſily angered*, ſays the wiſe man, *who can bear* ‡? *A ſtone is heavy and ſand weighty: but the anger of a fool is heavier than them both* §.

*The bad effects of anger.*

6. How many are the ſad effects of anger? from thence quarrels, injuries, detractions, enmities, deſires of revenge, oaths, blaſphemies, and a thouſand other ſins which it occaſions. *He that is eaſily ſtirred up to wrath, ſhall be more prone to ſin* ¶. From thence the ruin of friendſhip among friends, inward grudges, irreconcileable diſcords; from thence many misfortunes, revenge, blows, duels, dreadful and miſerable deaths.

Laſtly, Anger is abſolutely contrary to the ſpirit of Chriſtianity. *Whoſoever is angry with his brother ſhall be in danger of the judgment* ‖. *Learn of me, becauſe I am meek and humble of heart* **. *Charity*, ſays St. *Paul, is patient, is kind, is not provoked to anger* ††. *Let all bitterneſs and anger, and indignation and clamour, and blaſphemy be put away from you* ‡‡.

*Remedies*

* Prov. xii. 16. † Eccleſ. vii. 10. ‡ Prov. xviii. 14. § Prov. xxvii. 3. ¶ Prov. xxix. 22. ‖ Mat. v. 22. ** Mat. xi. 29. †† 1 Cor. xiii. 4, 5. ‡‡ Eph. iv. 31.

*Remedies againſt anger.*

If you be poſſeſſed by this paſſion, *Theotime*, uſe all your endeavours to moderate it: and for this intent read attentively the following maxims, and endeavour to practiſe them.

1. Never be provoked upon ſmall occaſions: for example, if one ſays ſome ſlighting words to you, or does ſomething that diſpleaſes you; if a ſervant be wanting to wait on you punctually; to be enraged on ſuch occaſions is an indiſcretion, and the effect of an irregular mind.

2. If the ill you have received be conſiderable, before you be troubled for it, ſee whether your anger will ſerve to remedy it, and you will very frequently find that it will be abſolutely uſeleſs for that purpoſe; and if it be unprofitable, it is a folly to vex yourſelf. For example, one has given you injurious words, or ſpoken ill of you; if you fall into a paſſion you will not repair the injury nor the detraction; you muſt then ſeek ſome other means, among which contempt is often the beſt.

3. Suppoſe it be fitting ſometimes to manifeſt ſome diſcontent for the evil another has done you, to hinder him from doing the ſame again, becauſe, according to the wiſe man, *By the ſadneſs of the countenance the mind of the offender is corrected**; yet it can never be profitable, either to conceive anger in one's heart, or to brawl, ſtorm, affront, or reproach. On the contrary, it leſſens your reaſon for complaint, if you have any; and it is againſt virtue, becauſe in all this you offend God.

4. Be then always upon your guard to prevent anger when you ſee it approaching. But if it ſhould ſometimes get the ſtart, before you have been able to avoid it, endeavour to return quickly to yourſelf, and to be eaſily appeaſed. Generous minds are ſoon pacified.

St. *Jerome* obſerves†, "That it is natural to a man to be angry, "but it is the property of a Chriſtian to keep it within bounds." St. *Ambroſe* ‡ relates of the Emperor *Theodoſius* the Great, "That "he was ſo much inclined to meekneſs, that he eſteemed himſelf "obliged very much when one aſked pardon, and when he was "moſt angry, he was moſt ready to pardon; ſo that one deſired "in him, what was feared in others, *viz.* that he ſhould be angry." O what an excellent example is this, and how deſerving of our imitation!



* Eccleſ. vii. 4. † Ep. ad Demetr. ‡ De obitu Theod.

5. When you have given way to paſſion, impoſe ſome puniſhment upon yourſelf, as prayer, alms, or other things; and expreſs a trouble for it to thoſe who ſaw you.

6. There is ſcarce any perſon but ſays or does ſomething in his anger of which he repents afterwards. When therefore you ſhall be in choler, reſtrain yourſelf as much as you can from ſaying or doing any thing which paſſion ſuggeſts. Never believe yourſelf when you are in a paſſion; wait till it be paſt, to judge whether a thing be ill ſpoken or done, and you will often find that it was not.

7. Entertain not your thoughts with the ſubject of your diſpleaſure, to perſuade yourſelf that you have juſt cauſe to be angry; this is but to cheriſh your paſſion: there is none but thinks he has a juſt reaſon to indulge paſſion. On the contrary, perſuade yourſelf that you may be deceived, and turn your mind to ſomething elſe. When your paſſion is over, your judgment will be leſs prejudiced, and often far different from what it was during your anger.

8. If you deſire to have an averſion for anger, conſider another attentively when he is in paſſion; you will ſee nothing in him and his actions, but what will diſpleaſe you. The ſame happens to you in reſpect of others when you are angry: and if you ſhould ſee yourſelf in a looking-glaſs, you would be vexed at yourſelf, and would not endure yourſelf in that condition.

9. Fly the converſation of impatient and choleric men, according to that excellent precept of the wiſe man, *Be not a friend to an angry man, leſt perhaps thou learn his ways**.

In a word, accuſtom yourſelf to be affable and mild towards others, to excuſe their faults, to forget injuries, to pardon eaſily, not to be exceptious and peeviſh, but to ſpeak mildly to all. Learn in good time, *Theotime*, the practice of that divine ſentence of *Jeſus Chriſt*, *Learn of me, becauſe I am meek, and humble of heart*†.

## CHAP. XV.

### *Of peace with our neighbour, againſt quarrels and enmities.*

*Young people are much ſubject to quarrels.*

ANGER produces quarrels, enmities, and other bad effects which we have ſpoken of. Now it is important that you ſhould be well inſtructed concerning theſe bad effects of this wicked cauſe, ſeeing that young men are

* Prov. xxii. 24, 25. † Matt. xi. 29.

are much subject to these disorders. The heat of their age makes them impatient to suffer the least injuries, indiscreet and inconsiderate to repress them any other ways than by those of passion, which leads them to dissensions, enmities, and revenge. From hence arise a vast number of mischiefs, and among others the ruin of virtue; for where there is no peace there can be no charity, nor consequently virtue. And as the Apostle St. *James* says, *Where envying and contention is, there is inconstancy and every evil work* *.

It is a rock which, with all possible care, you must avoid, learning in good time to hate quarrels and enmities, and to love peace and concord: for if you have not a peaceable spirit, the God of peace will not be with you †.

To acquire and preserve this peaceable spirit, you must beware of three things. 1. Not to quarrel with any person. 2. Not to give occasion to others to quarrel with you. 3. To behave yourself discreetly when any one has a difference with you.

1. Raise not therefore quarrels with others, upon any consideration. There are some people naturally quarrelsome, who are always at variance with others; impatient, unable to suffer; rash and inconsiderate, always guided by a fantastical humour, and not by reason. It is a wicked and pernicious quality, the mark of a weak mind: for, as the wise man says, *The lips of a fool intermeddle with strife: and his mouth provoketh quarrels* ‡. Be not you such an one, *Theotime*. *It is an honour for a man, to separate himself from quarrels; but all fools are meddling with reproaches* §. I speak not of another sort of quarrelsome persons, who through malice and a very wicked inclination seek quarrels, and take a pleasure in raising them, and making themselves enemies: these are ungracious men, who seek their own ruin, and find it at length, *An evil man always seeketh quarrels: but a cruel angel shall be sent against him* ¶; that is, the Devil will bring him some disaster which will destroy him.

2. It will not suffice to avoid quarrelling with our neighbour, unless we also prevent giving any occasion of offence; which is sometimes purposely given by froward and spiteful persons, lovers of disturbance, and enemies to peace, but most frequently through imprudence, for want of preventing what might provoke our neighbour.

*Give no occasion of quarrels.*



* Jam. iii. 16. † 2 Cor. xiii. 11. ‡ Prov. xviii. 6. § Prov. xx. 3. ¶ Prov. xvii. 11.

bour. Endeavour therefore to abſtain from every thing that may diſguſt your neighbour, as direct contradictions, detractions, indiſcreet reports, contempts, ſcoffs, injuries, and a thouſand other like things, the perpetual ſource of quarrels and miſunderſtandings among young people.

*Proceed with patience under all provocations.*

3. If it chance that any one quarrels with you, even when you gave no occaſion on your part, endeavour to behave diſcreetly, not permitting yourſelf to be carried away with the paſſion of anger, but mildly yet reſolutely repreſſing it. Above all, ſuffer not yourſelf to go ſo far as injuries or reproaches: ſtrive to appeaſe your neighbour with mildneſs, according to the advice of the wiſe man, *A mild anſwer breaketh wrath: but a harſh word ſtirreth up fury* *. Show modeſtly that you have done him no wrong, or excuſe yourſelf mildly if you have offended him; if he be not then pacified, withdraw yourſelf from his company, to let his anger cool.

*Anſwer to a common objection.*

But you will ſay, they will contemn me, and account me a coward. I anſwer, that none but weak minds will do ſo, as on the contrary, all diſcreet men will praiſe you for your moderation, and eſteem you much more. If courage conſiſted in quarrelling, and returning injury for injury, litigious perſons, and all baſe ſouls, would be more courageous than you. Courage conſiſts in deſpiſing injuries, modeſtly diſſembling, readily excuſing, and diſcreetly avoiding them when we can, and when we cannot, in ſupporting them with Chriſtian patience after the example and for the love of our Saviour, *Who, when he was reviled, did not revile: when he ſuffered he threatened not* †. This, *Theotime*, is the courage of a well-bred mind, the generoſity of a true Chriſtian, and of a faithful ſervant of God.

## CHAP. XVI.

### *Of pardoning injuries, againſt revenge.*

THERE is yet a neceſſary thing for preſerving peace and meekneſs towards our neighbour, which is the pardon of injuries. It is a virtue which muſt be learned betimes, by ſo much ſooner

25

* Prov. xv. 1. † 1 Pet. ii. 23.

as it is more difficult, very rare amongſt Chriſtians, and yet abſolutely neceſſary for ſalvation.

*We muſt learn from our youth to pardon injuries.*

You muſt learn, dear *Theotime*, to forgive the injuries done you by others; that is, never to harbour in your mind any hatred againſt your neighbour, whatever diſpleaſure you have received from him, nor to have any deſire of revenge, nor wiſh him any ill; but on the contrary, deſire his good, and ſhew him kindneſs, when his neceſſity, or the edification of others requires it.

*Strong reaſons to enforce the pardon of injuries.*

You will ſay that it is difficult. 'Tis true, but it is only hard to thoſe who have never conſidered the reaſons which oblige them to it; which are ſo ſtrong and powerful, that they, who after ever ſo little reflection on them are not convinced, muſt needs have loſt all their ſenſe and judgment.

1. God will have it ſo, and abſolutely without any exception commands it. He has ſaid in the Old Teſtament, *Seek not revenge, nor be mindful of the injury of thy citizens* *. And in the New, his Son *Chriſt Jeſus* has ſolemnly renewed the prohibition. *I ſay to you, love your enemies, do good to them that hate you* †. *Render to no man evil for evil*, ſays St. *Paul* ‡. *Whoſoever hateth his brother*, ſays St. *John*, *is a murderer* §.

2. He commands it in ſuch a manner, that he will not pardon your ſins, except you from your heart pardon all thoſe who have offended you. *Forgive, and you ſhall be forgiven*, ſays the Son of God; *For with the ſame meaſure that you ſhall mete withal, it ſhall be meaſured to you again* ‖. *If you will not forgive men, neither will your Father forgive you your offences* ¶. *Judgment without mercy*, ſays the Apoſtle St. *James*, *to him that hath not done mercy* **. Conſider this well, and ſee whether you would not have God pardon you.

3. This will of God is grounded on ſo manifeſt a point of equity, that even the moſt obſtinate cannot contradict it. Is there any thing more juſt, than that God ſhould treat you as you treat others? that he ſhould forgive you as you forgive others? that he ſhould revenge himſelf of you, if you will be revenged of thoſe who have offended you? Is not this juſt? Weigh well, *Theotime*, what I am going to ſay. You would have God



* Lev. xix. 18. † Mat. v. 44. ‡ Rom. xii. 17. § 1 John iii. 15. ‖ Luke vi. 37, 38. ¶ Mat. vi. 15. ** Jam. ii. 13.

*A point to be well considered.*

infinite in majesty and power, offended, by whom? by his own creature, after he had bestowed upon it all imaginable favours; offended most grievously, and with an infinite offence, for which neither you nor all creatures together, although you should join your lamentations with them for all eternity, could know how to make him proper satisfaction; in short, injured by an offence which deserves an eternal damnation, which cannot be avoided but by his pure mercy, which he is not obliged to shew you: you would, I say, desire that a God so great, offended by you so grievously, should pardon you such an offence, and remit you such a punishment; and will not you pardon your brother, one like yourself, a small offence? You, who are a sinner as he is, and who have need of pardon as well as he; you, who perhaps have wronged him first, or at least have shewed him no kindness, or if you have, it is not to be compared with what God has shewn you; nay, moreover, that favour you have done him came not from you, but from God: will you, I say, after all these considerations seek revenge and satisfaction for your offence, and will not have God revenge himself of you? are not you unjust, yea, even ridiculous? *One man keepeth anger against another, and doth he seek to be healed by God? He hath no mercy on a man like himself, and doth he intreat for his own sins? He that is but flesh, nourisheth anger, and doth he ask forgiveness of God? Who*, says the wise man, *shall obtain pardon for his sins* ?*

*An answer to a common objection on this subject.*

After this, *Theotime*, what have you to answer? will you say that it is hard to pardon? say also, that it is hard to obtain pardon of your sins from God. Will you say, that you will not? Say likewise, that you will not ask pardon of God! Say no longer in the Lord's prayer, *Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us*, but, *take vengeance of me, as I do of those who have offended me.* Weigh this well, *Theotime*, and consider what you ought to say and do on this occasion.

But you will say, I would freely pardon him, and not revenge myself; but I can never prevail upon myself to love and wish him well, who has offended me, and would still do me a mischief. If so, grant then that you would not have God love you, nor bestow upon you any blessing; for he will treat you as you treat your neighbour.

* Eccli. xxviii. 3, 4, 5.

neighbour. Say that you will not love another like yourſelf, for the love of *Jeſus Chriſt*, who has loved you ſo as to die for your ſalvation when you were his enemy; and that God having loved you when you were unworthy, you will not love your brother, except he be worthy of your love. Say that you will not love your neighbour for the love of God, but for the love of yourſelf only. And although God commands you to love him who has offended you, exhorts you to it, and accounts the love you render to one like you, as done to his own perſon; yet all this is not capable of making you quit the reſentment and hatred you bear in your heart. Say, in ſhort, that you do not wiſh to obtain the grace of God, and eternal life, ſince the ſcripture teaches us, that *We have paſſed from death to life; becauſe we love the brethren. He that loveth not, abideth in death**.

Let us conclude, *Theotime*, that either we muſt renounce Chriſtianity, the love of God, and eternal ſalvation, or we muſt neceſſarily pardon injuries, love our enemies, and render good for evil. But as this virtue is difficult through the corruption of nature and the depravity of mankind, which cannot reliſh it, you muſt learn it in good time, and beg it frequently of God. Implore him that he would give you a meek and peaceable heart, rendering good for evil. Accuſtom yourſelf from your youth to pardon ſmall injuries, not to render ill for ill, that you may learn to pardon great ones if ever offered, for the love of him who has ſaved you, when he might moſt juſtly have deſtroyed you for all eternity†.

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## CHAP. XVII.

### *Of the love of our neighbour.*

THIS virtue is the mother of the three former, and thoſe who are deſtitute of it, fall into all the diſorders we have ſpoken of in the three laſt chapters: for anger, diſſenſions, animoſities, revenge, ſpring only from the want of charity, and becauſe we love not our neighbour in a Chriſtian manner, and as God commands us to love him.

It is of the greateſt importance, that you be inſtructed in this virtue, becauſe it is a fundamental virtue of Chriſtianity, which is eſtabliſhed upon theſe two laws, *Love God above all things, and your neighbour as yourſelf;* yet very rare, and ill complied with by Chriſtians.



The

* 1 Joh. iii. 14. †. St. Ambroſe or. de obitu Theodoſii.

*A common error concerning the love of our neighbour.*

The generality of Christians believe, that to love their parents, their friends, and those from whom they expect any favour, is sufficient without the least regarding the rest of mankind. This is not to love our neighbour, but ourselves. Children from their youth are bred up in this opinion; they are taught only to love those who do them good, and hate those who do them hurt. From hence arise all the animosities which disfigure the face of Christendom, the harshness with which men treat one another, and the little support they either mutually give or receive in their respective necessities: whence arises too great a propensity to quarrels, injuries, ill treatments, hatred, and revenge.

It is highly necessary to disabuse young persons of this common error, and to instruct them in this virtue so necessary for salvation.

*Three things to be known in the love of our neighbour.*

This error proceeds from the ignorance of three things which ought to be known in this virtue; that is, who are our neighbours, the motive for which they must be loved, and in what this love consists.

1. *Who he is.*

1. Our neighbours who must be loved are all men, even the most unknown, great and mean, poor and rich, good and bad, friend and foe.

2. *The motive to love him.*

2. The motive for which they must be loved, is, because they are all the children of God, created to his image, redeemed by the blood of his Son *Jesus Christ*; because God, who is our common Father, and because *Jesus Christ*, who is our common Saviour, has commanded us to love them.

3. *In what it consists.*

3. This love consists in three things: in wishing good to all; in doing it when we can, both in temporals and spirituals; in bearing with their defects, and excusing their faults.

This is, *Theotime*, true charity, which is one of the foundations of virtue, the mark of a Christian spirit, without which we cannot please God, nor have any real virtue; to attain to this degree of charity, you must aim at it from your most tender infancy.

1. Accustom

1. Accuſtom yourſelf to conſider all men as your brethren, and in this quality to deſire good to all of them. Be meek and benevolent to all; have compaſſion on the poor and afflicted; be not envious at the rich, and thoſe in proſperity: love the good, by reaſon of their virtue; the wicked, that they may become good; deſiring the perſeverance of the former, and the converſion of the latter. We muſt hate ſin, which is the work of man; but love man, who is the work of God.

*Practice.*

1. *To deſire good to all.*

2. Being it is nothing to wiſh one good, except we do it when we can; uſe yourſelf to be ready and inclined to do good to your neighbour when you can. Now there are three ſorts of good which we may procure to our neighbour; in his body, in his honour, and in his ſoul.

2. *To procure it when we can.*

*Three ſorts of good.*

As for the firſt, aſſiſt others in their neceſſities, according to the power and opportunities you have: give alms freely to the poor. What an excellent virtue in a young man is mercy and compaſſion for the poor! Happy thoſe who can ſay with *Job*, *From my infancy mercy grew up with me**. Becauſe it will draw down many divine bleſſings upon them during their life, and at the hour of their death, as it is ſaid in the ſcripture†.

1. *Corporal.*

As for their reputation, you ought to preſerve it for your neighbour as much as poſſible. Hinder calumnies and detractions. If one be accuſed of a wickedneſs which he has not done, defend him, and ſay that it is not ſo. If the ill he has done be diſcovered, endeavour to excuſe him, and hinder its being ſpoken of any more: ſpeak of ſome other good he has done, or ſome good quality he is endowed with: ſhow that detraction diſpleaſes you, and exhort him who utters it, to ſpare the reputation of his neighbour.

2. *Moral.*

As for the good of the ſoul, which conſiſts in virtue and ſalvation, ſince it is the greateſt of all good, you muſt uſe all poſſible means to procure it for your neighbour. You will perform this by praying for him, by endeavouring to withdraw him from vice, and ſinful occaſions, if he be in them, either by yourſelf, or by others who can prevail with him, by mildly putting him in mind of his duty,

3. *Spiritual.*

* Job xxxi. 18. † Tob. iv.

duty, or causing him to be admonished. Accustom yourself to do all these things to them who are nearest to you, as your friends, your companions, your servants, and to those with whom you converse. This is the true love of our neighbour, to love him for his salvation and eternity.

*To bear with his defects.*

3. There remains a third thing necessary for the love of our neighbour, which is charitably to bear with his defects, and excuse his faults, as much as prudence will permit; not to be apt to blame and reprehend, either without knowledge, or with bitterness, or without any necessity or advantage. Now there is no necessity or advantage, when the reprehension does not avail for the amendment of him who is faulty, nor for the edification of others.

In a word, *Theotime*, the great rule of the love of our neighbour, consists in judging him by ourselves, according to the maxim of the wise man, *Judge of the disposition of thy neighbour by thyself**; and in practising that great maxim of the scripture, and which nature herself teaches us, *See thou never do to another what thou wouldst hate to have done to thee by another*†. And also do to others the good which rationally, and according to God, you would have done to you on the like occasion. 'Tis the maxim our Lord has taught us in those words, *Whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you also to them*‡.

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## CHAP. XVIII.

*Of fraternal correction, or of the obligation of hindering another's sin, when in our power.*

WHAT we have said of the obligation charity imposes upon Christians, of procuring the salvation of our neighbour when we can, deserves a more particular reflection, it being a thing of high importance, and nevertheless infinitely neglected, and for the most part absolutely unknown. It sounds like a new language, and an imaginary duty.

Yet there is nothing more common in the sacred scripture, which teaches us, that *God gave to every one commandment concerning his neighbour*§, that *we should edify one another*¶, *admonish one another*‖. *Have*

* Eccli. xxxi. 18. † Job iv. 16. ‡ Matt. vii. 12. § Eccli. xvii 12. ¶ 1 Thess. v. 11. ‖ Rom. xv. 14.

*Have no fellowſhip with the unfruitful works of darkneſs*, that is, the ſins of another, *but rather reprove them**.

*To love God above all things, and our neighbour as ourſelves.* For how do we love our neighbour as ourſelves, if his greateſt neceſſities, which are thoſe of his ſalvation, move us ſo little, that we abandon them for our leaſt intereſts, which are frequently only fancied and trifling? And how do we love God above all things, if we neglect to prevent his being offended, when in our power.

This obligation is ſo great, that it has made St. *John Chryſoſtom*† deliver himſelf in very ſtrong terms, *viz.* "That God will require "no leſs account of us, of the ſalvation of our neighbour than of "our own; and that when we ſhall have lived all our life very "piouſly, if we have neglected the ſalvation of others upon occa- "ſions, the ſanctity of our life will be unprofitable, it being cer- "tain, that that negligence is ſo criminal that it alone may be the "cauſe of our damnation. He gives the reaſon, becauſe he who "is wanting to aſſiſt his neighbour in his corporal neceſſities, is "rejected by God at the day of judgment, notwithſtanding the "good he hath otherwiſe performed: much more he, who neg- "lects to ſuccour his brother in a thing of far greater conſequence, "as is the ſalvation of his ſoul, will deſerve all manner of puniſh- "ments."

The diſcharge of this great obligation depends upon the practice of the commandment of fraternal correction which our Lord has given us, and whereof he has preſcribed the order in Chap. XVIII. of St. *Matthew: If thy brother ſhall offend againſt thee, go, and reprove him between thee and him alone. If he ſhall hear thee, thou ſhalt gain thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, take with thee one or two more. And if he will not hear them, tell the Church*‡.

That you may underſtand this commandment, ſo little known, and ſo ill practiſed, I ſhall obſerve here four or five truths, which will facilitate the underſtanding and practice of it. *Five things of conſequence to be obſerved in this command.*

The firſt is, the end of this commandment, which is to remedy the misfortune of our neighbour, by preventing our neighbour from relapſing into his fault, or others from offending by his example or inducement. *Its end.*

The

* Eph. v. 11. † Adverſus vituperatores vitæ Monaſt. lib. 5. ‡ Matt. xviii. 15, 16, 17.

*The persons it obliges.*

The second is, that this commandment obliges not only superiours, but all sorts of persons, it being a command of charity, "which, "(as St. *Thomas* says) every one is obliged to "have."

*The circumstances wherein it obliges.*

The third is, that this obligation is understood only when these two circumstances occur. 1. When we know the ill committed, and evident danger of our neighbour relapsing into it, or causing others to fall therein. 2. When we can hinder the evil of another by applying a remedy; for what is not in our power, cannot be commanded.

The fourth is, that this power of preventing the mischief, is not only understood of what we ourselves may do, but also of what we may effect by another's means. This is what our Lord has put beyond a doubt, in saying, if he hear not you, take some other person with you; and if he still continue to persist, tell the church.

The fifth remark is, that what he says of telling the church, that is, its superiours may be performed either privately or publicly; and that when the first way, that is, the secret, suffices to hinder the evil, as ordinarily it does, we are not obliged to the second.

Thus, to collect all these observations, and join them together; the commandment of fraternal correction obliges every one to hinder the evil or sin of another, when he knows it, and can remedy it, by himself or by other persons, who may be employed for that end. Whence it follows, that to discharge one's self of the obligation of this commandment, one is obliged to prevent evil by another, when one cannot by himself.

We cannot fail in this duty without a heinous sin, and the neglect of it will be found to be without excuse in the eyes of God. Indeed, *Theotime*, is it not highly criminal before God, to see or know any one in danger of losing his soul, and neglect giving the assistance in our power? And to be no more concerned to hinder his neighbour from mortally offending God, when he can, than to divert him from drinking a glass of water? *He that hath the substance of this world*, (says St. *John*) *and shall see his brother in need, and shall shut up his bowels from him; how doth the charity of God abide*

*abide in him* *. If this be so in corporal necessities, what will it be in spiritual? St. *Chrysostom* says †, "it is an excessive cruelty to "neglect thus a neighbour. And if it be an inhumanity not to "help to raise a beast fallen under his burthen, how can it but be "the utmost cruelty not to do that for the soul of his brother, "which men do for brute beasts?" "A beast fallen (says St. "*Bernard*) finds those who raise it; a soul is lost, and no one is "concerned ‡."

"If the old law (says St. *Chrysostom* §) strictly commanded not "to neglect the ox of our enemy when he is found strayed, but "to bring him back to his master; what pardon ought he to ex-"pect, who neglects and abandons not a strayed ox of his enemy, "but the soul of his brother-christian lost in sin."

"If your brother (says St. *Austin* ¶) had a mortal wound upon "his body, which he would conceal for fear of incision, would it "not be an inhumanity in you to conspire by your silence with "him in his design? As on the contrary, you would shew him a "great kindness, to discover his misfortune to a physician, that a "remedy may be applied. With how much more reason ought you "to do the same thing for the wounds of his soul, since they are "far more fatal if neglected, and permitted to putrefy in the "heart, by hastening death, and infecting others with their "stench."

If you should see the beginning of a fire, which you might easily put out, either by yourself, or at least by warning others who might do it, would you not be guilty of all the mischief if you were defective therein? From this comparison judge of your own guilt, if, knowing your own neighbour's sin, you keep it a secret from those who might put a stop to it. Doubtless, you are answerable to God for all the evil your neighbour commits, which by a secret and charitable admonition you might have prevented. How many mortal sins are there committed in consequence of such negligence as this?

Consider, *Theotime*, and weigh well all these reasons. What would you answer to God in his dreadful judgment, if through remissness, vain fear, or a sinful complaisance, as it frequently happens, you should be so unhappy as to fall into that criminal neglect?

* 1 John iii. 17. † De ferendis reprehensionibus. ‡ Hom. 4 in 1 Cor. § Hom. 4 in 1 Cor. ¶ Ep. 109.

neglect? What reason could you alledge for such neglect? What can be equal to the salvation of a soul, or one mortal sin which you might have prevented? What will you say when you shall be reproached, that you had a greater apprehension of displeasing your neighbour, than God; and that frequently, through indiscretion, anger, or malice, you were not afraid to divulge that, which you would not discover secretly through charity? But what will you answer when it shall be made to appear, that you might have often hindered the wickedness of another, without any danger, and that you had only an imaginary fear, or rather a great slackness, or foolish complaisance, which has hindered you from it? You will then see yourself partaker of the sins of another, and charged with many faults which you might have hindered, and which were caused by your silence: God will exact an account of them from you.

You must avoid this misfortune, *Theotime;* and to this end, practise what the Son of God has prescribed us. When you see any one offend God mortally, as by swearing, lewd discourse, or bad example, or know of any infamous behaviour, endeavour to divert him from it, if you can, by your mild and charitable admonitions. If you cannot, as not having sufficient courage to do it, or sufficient authority to hinder it, do what our Lord appoints you, employ discreetly other persons therein, which you know can perform it better than you, and particularly those who have the conduct of him, whom you know to have gone astray.

This is the rule which St. *Augustine*, after our Lord, gives on this occasion, in his 109th epistle, where he adds these excellent words, which are inserted in the canon law; "Believe not, (says "he) that it is to do hurt to your neighbour, to discover thus his "wickedness, with a desire of remedying it: on the contrary, you "are guilty of his ruin, if when you might heal his evil by de-"claring it to the physician, you permit him to perish by your "silence."

Now if we must act thus even when our neighbour's sin hurts but himself alone, we are much more obliged when it prejudices others, whether by ill example, or his wicked discourse; for then we must desist from private remonstrances, which can avail nothing, and go directly to them who can, and ought to watch for the good and salvation of others, that we may prevent by them the mischief, and hinder the ruin of another, or of many.

*My*

*My Brethren*, says St. *James*, *if any of you err from the truth, and one convert him: he must know, that he who causeth a sinner to be converted from the error of his way, shall save his soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins**.

## CHAP. XIX.

### *Of friendships.*

I Speak here of friendships, because they conduce much to bring youth to good or evil, according as they are good or bad; and since young people are much inclined to love, and besides, not having sufficient light to discern good friendships from hurtful, it often falls out that they contract very bad friendships, which prejudice them very much, and are most commonly the cause of their ruin.

There is a difference between the love of our neighbour and friendship. We must love all men in the manner we have said, but we cannot have friendship with all men, because friendship is a mutual and particular love.

*What friendship is.*

It is a reciprocal communication of affections, by which two persons particularly love one another, and mutually procure good to one another.

Friendship is such as is the subject on which it is founded; if we love in a friend a wicked thing, the friendship is bad and vicious. If we love a vain and frivolous thing, as beauty, good behaviour, the friendship is frivolous and foolish. If we love a good thing, the friendship is good and laudable. Now this good thing must be a real virtue, or a perfection which may advance virtue, as science, fine parts, or the like.

*Three conditions of friendship to be good.*

Friendship, to be good and real, ought to have three conditions: It must be founded upon virtue, tending to virtue, and conducted by virtue.

1. It must be built upon virtue, that is, we must love a friend by reason of some good and laudable quality, which we discover in him.

2. Tending to virtue, because friendship ought to desire and procure the good of a friend. Now virtue is the greatest and most necessary

* Jam. v. 19, 20.

neceſſary of all goods: and the friendſhip by which friends procure favours to one another, if it neglect mutually to advance virtue according to its power, is not a friendſhip, but a manifeſt deceit.

3. It ought to be directed by virtue, that is, virtue ought to be the rule of it, and one friend ſhould do nothing for another which may be contrary to virtue. Friendſhip which cauſes God to be offended for a friend's ſake, is a deteſtable and curſed friendſhip, becauſe it makes one love man more than God.

By theſe three conditions, *Theotime*, you will eaſily diſcern good friendſhip from evil, and that you ought to fly, from that you ought to ſeek.

You ought to fly the friendſhip of thoſe in whom you find no virtue, nor any perfection which you may love, as eſpecially the friendſhip of thoſe you know to be ſubject to any vice, as to impurity, drunkenneſs, ſwearing, whoſe friendſhip will make you learn their wicked qualities; becauſe, as the wiſe man ſays, *A friend of fools*, that is, of vicious people, *ſhall become like them**.

Fly all friendſhip which does not tend to your improvement. Such is the friendſhip of thoſe who ſearch after nothing in your love but their own profit, or ſome vain complacence they take in loving you, or being beloved by you; of thoſe, who when they can, do not adviſe you for your good and your ſalvation. But above all, abhor the friendſhip of thoſe who ſolicit you to ſin, or flatter and cheriſh you in your vices. You ought to avoid theſe friends, as your greateſt and moſt mortal enemies.

Avoid the company of all thoſe who ſcruple not to offend God for your ſake, and to pleaſe you; for example, to rob, to cheat, to quarrel, to ſwear, to detract, to treat ill their neighbour, to challenge in a duel, and other ſuch like things. Have a horror of theſe friendſhips, and account that maxim for certain, that "He "who is unfaithful to God, cannot be a friend to a man†;" and although he might, yet you cannot adhere to that friendſhip, without making yourſelf an enemy to God.

On the contrary, ſeek after the friendſhip of thoſe whom you know to be well diſpoſed, and endowed with ſome good qualities, by which you may profit; who will move you to virtue by their example and good diſcourſes, who will aſſiſt you therein by their counſels, not flatter you in your vices, but freely and charitably admoniſh you, according to that fine obſervation of the wiſe man; *Better are the wounds of a friend, than the deceitful kiſſes of an enemy*‡.

In

* Prov. xiii. 20. † S. Amb. 3 Offic. cap. 19. ‡ Prov. xxvii. 6.

In a word, thoſe who in their friendſhip have the fear of God for their rule, and your greateſt and moſt deſirable good, which is your amendment and ſalvation for their principal end. Theſe, *Theotime*, are the good and true friendſhips you muſt by ſo much more ſeek after, as they are moſt rare, and carefully entertain when you have found them. Theſe are the friendſhips whereof the wiſe man ſpeaks, when he ſays, *A faithful friend is a ſtrong defence: and he that hath found him, hath found a treaſure. No weight of gold and ſilver is able to countervail the goodneſs of his fidelity. A faithful friend is the medicine of life and immortality**. Love and ſeek after ſuch a friendſhip, which when you have met with, adhere to it carefully, and abandon it not through levity, as young people ordinarily do.

To find this friendſhip, remember firſt, to implore it often of God, who is the author of it. *They that fear the Lord*, ſays the wiſe man, *ſhall find that friend*†. In the ſecond place, be careful to love firſt; for you muſt love to be beloved: but this love muſt be ſuch an one as is built upon virtue, tending to virtue, and directed by virtue.

## CHAP. XX.

### *Of ſports and recreations.*

RECREATION is neceſſary to relax the ſpirits, and particularly of young people; and that which is taken in innocent diverſion is moſt proper for them, it being more proportioned to their nature, and the capacity of their mind.

Paſtime then and recreation is not contrary to virtue, but rather commanded; and it is an act of virtue when it is done as it ought.

To be ſuch, it is neceſſary above all things that the motive be good; that is, that it be taken to recreate the mind, and to make it more capable of labour, which it could not be able to undergo, if it were always employed. So that labour is the end and motive of ſport and recreation, for which it is deſigned. We recreate ourſelves on account of the fatigue we have undergone, and in order to undergo more. *The motive of ſport.*

From thence three conditions follow, which muſt be obſerved in paſtime, that it may be good and virtuous. *Three conditions to be obſerved.*



* Eccli. vi. 14, 15, 16. † Eccli. vi. 16.

*Moderation.* The firſt, to obſerve moderation; for exceſs herein renders it no longer a recreation, but rather an employment; it would not then be taken to prepare us for new labour, which is the ſole end paſtime ought to have, but merely for our pleaſure, which is a vicious end; yea, it is to make one unfit for labour, becauſe exceſs in amuſement diſſipates the ſpirits, enfeebles the forces of the body, and oftentimes conſiderably prejudices the health by the diſtempers it cauſes.

*An orderly affection.* The ſecond condition is, not to have a diſorderly affection for amuſements, as it happens frequently to young perſons. This affection makes them fall into the exceſs juſt mentioned, loſe much time, and think continually of the means of diſſipation. It generally prevents their applying themſelves ſeriouſly to labour, and when their body is at ſtudy, their mind is bent upon their ſport and divertiſement.

*Avoiding games of hazard.* The third condition is, to fly as much as poſſible from games of *hazard*, which enſlave the minds principally of youths, and inſtead of refreſhing the ſpirits, load them with anxiety: one is there ſo deeply concerned in loſing or winning, that it is hard to obſerve moderation. They play there only out of covetouſneſs and for gain, which is a criminal motive; conſider alſo the ordinary loſſes one ſuffers, which leave after them diſpleaſure, vexation, and deſpair: add to theſe cheats, unjuſt gain, choler, ſwearing, quarrels, with which theſe ſorts of games are ordinarily attended; the great loſs of time, the diſſipation of mind and goods, the ſinful habits of anger, of impatience, of ſwearing, of lying, of covetouſneſs, a neglect of duty to God and their family, an adherence to ill company, an averſion to what is ſerious, and a love to be idle and to make their life but a change or ſucceſſion of idleneſs. Such an unhappy inclination to play frequently continues all their life, to the ruin of their wealth and honour, and reduces them to the utmoſt miſery, as we daily ſee by too many examples, and in ſhort, makes a man incapable of all good.

*The bad effects of play.*

*Practice.* Avoid all prohibited games, *Theotime*, as abſolutely inconſiſtent with your ſalvation: amuſe yourſelf in ſome laudable diverſion which may

may ſerve to unbend the mind, or exerciſe the body, obſerving therein the conditions we have ſpoken of, eſpecially avoiding all exceſs, which St. *Auguſtine* in his confeſſions* acknowledged to be one of the cauſes of the wickedneſs of his youth. Now this exceſs is underſtood not only of the time employed therein, which ought to be well regulated, but alſo of the money you play for, which ought always to be very little; otherwiſe you will play for gain, and not for recreation, and the ſport will be a rack and diſquiet, rather than a diverſion. Beſides, the money you loſe at play would be better employed amongſt the poor, whoſe neceſſities will cry one day to God againſt your exceſſes, and thoſe of all gameſters.

## CHAP. XXI.

### *Of liberality againſt covetouſneſs.*

ALTHOUGH it may ſeem that covetouſneſs is not an ordinary vice amongſt young perſons, yet it is very neceſſary to arm them againſt this paſſion, which once taking root, is eaſily encreaſed, and cauſes vaſt diſorders in their life.

*Youth muſt be armed againſt covetouſneſs.*

Covetouſneſs is an inordinate love of money. There are two ſorts; the one makes us love money, to heap up treaſures, or to make purchaſes; the other, makes us affect it, to ſquander and laviſh it away in pleaſures. The firſt is but rare amongſt young people; but the ſecond is very common, and highly prejudicial.

*Two ſorts of covetouſneſs.*

Experience verifies this: For as they earneſtly love their pleaſures, they ſeek all means of gratifying them, which cannot be effected without money: hence they apply all their endeavours to get it; hence the cheats and tricks they make uſe of towards their parents, to extort it from them; hence their cozening in play, their hard-heartedneſs to the poor, and ſometimes robberies and unjuſt ways to procure it.

*How common among young perſons.*



* Lib. 2.

*How prejudicial.*

This paſſion having thus taken its beginning in youth, eaſily increaſes, and ſtrengthening itſelf by age becomes ſo deeply rooted, that it can never be hereafter extirpated. It then cauſes that general diſorder amongſt Chriſtians, which the prophet deplores, when he ſays, that *From the leaſt of them even to the greateſt all are given to covetouſneſs* *; that is, to the irregular love of the things of the world, which St. *Paul* ſays is *the root of all evils* †.

*Three cauſes of avarice in young men.*

This vice takes its origin from three cauſes in youth. The firſt is, what we have now ſpoken of, a diſorderly love of pleaſure. The ſecond is, the common example of the world, which they ſee loves and eſteems money above all things, and runs after it with inſatiable greedineſs. The third is the fault of parents, who inſpire this love into their children from their tender years, diſcourſing of nothing but the care of getting their livelihood, if they be mean or poor, or of advancing and aſpiring to a higher fortune, if they be rich; teaching thus their children that which St. *Cyprian* reproaches them for ‡, that is, *to love more their riches than* Jeſus Chriſt; and to labour in ſuch a manner for the goods of this mortal life, that they think little or nothing on thoſe of eternity.

*It muſt be prevented betimes.*

This evil, dear *Theotime*, muſt be prevented in good time, and hindered from taking poſſeſſion of your heart, it being certain, that there is no vice which increaſes more with age than this, and which becomes more incapable of remedy. For this effect take notice of what I counſel you.

*Firſt means.*

1. Being, as we have ſaid, that the greateſt cauſe of this covetouſneſs in young people, ſprings from the love of pleaſures, uſe all your endeavours to moderate that paſſion, which may be ſaid to be one of the greateſt evils of youth, the cauſe of all their misfortunes, and the chief obſtacle to ſalvation. Paſs not from this place without making reflections upon it, and thinking how neceſſary it is to reſtrain and moderate ſuch exceſſive love of pleaſures.

*Second means.*

2. That the love of money may not take poſſeſſion of your ſoul, think often of that maxim of St. *Paul*, that *covetouſneſs is the root of all evils.*

* Jer. vi. 13. † 1 Tim. vi. 10. ‡ L. de opere & eleemoſyna.

*evils**. These evils are the sins of the world, as well as its misfortunes, whereof the greatest part springs from this fatal cause, as it would be easy to make appear.

3. Be persuaded, that riches damn many, be they rich or poor; the rich by the ill use of them, the poor by covetousness. *Know*, says the same Apostle, *that no covetous person hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God* †. *Third means.*

4. Accustom yourself not to desire money but for your necessities, and for your innocent recreations; and when you lack it, bear that want with patience, considering how many poor there are who have not necessaries, yet you are not better than they. Above all, never make use of deceit, imposition, nor any other unlawful way of getting it. *Fourth means.*

5. Avoid certain things which are the marks or effects of avarice in young people, and which excite it much; as to play for gain, to be too fearful of losing at play, to dispute for a small thing, to keep any thing from another, and much more never to take any thing be it what it will, which is, besides the sin, a damnable custom, and of very dangerous consequence. *Fifth means.*

6. Love the poor, give alms freely, allot some part of the money you have for your recreations, to supply their necessities. Is it not a shame in you to be prodigal in your pleasures, in your clothes, in your superfluities, and to be so covetous and hard-hearted in regard to the necessities of the poor, who are men like yourself, and sometimes better than you in the sight of God? *Sixth means.*

In fine, you are either poor, or of a moderate fortune, or rich.

If you be poor, beg of God the grace to take your poverty with patience, as a penance, and for his love. Confide in his providence, which will never be wanting to his servants. *If God so clothe the grass of the field*, according to the saying of our Lord, *how much more you, O ye of little faith? Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God, and his justice, and all these things shall be added unto you.* Read the sixth Chapter of St. *Matthew*, from ver. 24.

If your fortune be moderate, endeavour to be content, and not to disquiet yourself by coveting a greater. Call to mind what St. *Paul* says, *They that will become rich, fall into temptation; and into*



* 1 Tim. vi. 10. † Ephes. v. 5.

*the ſnares of the Devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful deſires, which drown men in deſtruction and perdition. For covetouſneſs is the root of all evils* *.

Wherefore practiſe the beſt you can that great maxim which the ſame Apoſtle gives to Chriſtians; *Let your manners be without covetouſneſs, contented with ſuch things as you have, for he hath ſaid: I will not leave thee* †.

If you be rich, ſtand in great fear of the danger to which your riches expoſe your ſalvation. *Wo be to you that are rich*, ſays the Son of God, *for you have your conſolation* ‡. On occaſion of a rich young man, he ſaid, that it is very difficult for the rich to be ſaved. To avoid the dangers thereof, read and practiſe what we have ſaid in the chapter of the obſtacles of rich young perſons, in Part III. Chap. X.

## CHAP. XXII.

### *Of charity towards the poor.*

THERE is no virtue more extolled nor more earneſtly recommended in the Holy Scriptures than charity to the poor, and compaſſion for the miſeries and neceſſities of others. In the old law God has ſo ſtrongly enforced it, that he will not allow any one to be reduced to the neceſſity of begging §. The pious *Toby* ¶ admoniſhes his ſon never to turn his face from the poor, aſſuring him that for ſo doing, God would never turn his face from him, but aſſiſt him in all his neceſſities. The wiſe man ‖ cautions you not to diſappoint the poor of his alms, nor to turn your eyes from him: not to give him occaſion by your refuſal, to wiſh ill to you, becauſe his prayer will be heard; on the contrary, an alms given to the poor, will intercede for him who beſtowed it.

In the New Teſtament nothing is ſo frequently recommended as alms: the Son of God has declared **, that they ſhall obtain pardon for ſins. He has promiſed to be bountiful to us if we are ſo to the poor, and that he will deal with us as we behave to our neighbour ††, St. *Paul* has ſaid after him, that the alms we give to the poor, are ſo many ſacrifices for obtaining the mercy of God ‡‡. And St. *John* in his 1ſt Epiſtle §§, aſſures us, that he who has not com-

* 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10. † Heb. xiii. 5. ‡ Luke vi. 24. § Deut. xv. 4. ¶ Toby iv. 7. ‖ Eccli. iv. xxix. ** Luke xi. 41. †† Luke vi. 38. ‡‡ Heb. xiii 16. §§ Chap. iii.

compaſſion for the neceſſities of his neighbour, cannot ſay he has charity, or that he loves God; becauſe if he loved God, he would aſſiſt his neighbour, whom God has commanded him to love like himſelf.

But of all that is ſaid in the ſcripture concerning the giving of alms, nothing more clearly evinces the obligations of it than what the Son of God will ſay at the day of judgment to the elect and the reprobate. To the firſt he will ſay: *Come, ye bleſſed of my Father, poſſeſs the kingdom prepared for you; for I was hungry, and you gave me to eat: I was thirſty and you gave me to drink: naked, and you clothed me*, &c. To the reprobate he will ſay: *Depart from me, you curſed, into everlaſting fire; for I was hungry and you gave me not to eat: I was thirſty, and you gave me not to drink*, &c. He adds, that what is given or refuſed to the poor, is given or refuſed to him *.

It is very ſurpriſing, that of all the good works which the juſt ſhall have done for gaining life everlaſting, the Son of God ſhould attribute their ſalvation to the charity alone, they have exerciſed towards their neighbour! And that of all the crimes, by which the wicked have deſerved eternal damnation, he ſhould only point out their hard-heartedneſs to the ſufferings of others! And as the Son of God, the wiſdom of the eternal Father, neither did nor ſaid any thing without the ſtrongeſt reaſons, we can aſſign no other for the expreſſions he will uſe at the day of judgment, than that he would let us ſee by thoſe words, how great a value he ſets upon the charity ſhewed to others; and that the juſt by charity deſerve a continuation of his grace for their final perſeverance; as on the other ſide, the wicked, through their want of compaſſion for the wretched, have deſerved to be diſregarded by God, when involved in the miſeries of ſin, and being abandoned by him as they abandoned the poor, have died impenitent, and are loſt for ever.

I wiſh that all Chriſtians reflected ſeriouſly on theſe aſtoniſhing words of the Son of God, and what will befall them at the day of judgment, if they neglect to aſſiſt their neighbour. Then they will ſee their error; but, alas, it will be too late!

For your part, *Theotime*, who are deſirous of labouring betimes in the great affair of ſalvation, be not diſpleaſed if I warn you to prevent ſo great an evil, and exhort you to accuſtom yourſelf from your youth to acts of charity, according to your abilities. Delight



* Mat. xxv.

in taking compaſſion on the miſeries of others. When you ſee a poor man, or one in diſtreſs, remember he is your equal, and if you do not ſuffer like him, it is owing to God's great goodneſs towards you: but on this account, he expects that you imitate him in your behaviour to others, and that you aſſiſt them with what he has beſtowed upon you, employing for their relief what you laviſh away in diverſions, and perhaps oftentimes in offending God. Cheriſh, as you grow up, this amiable virtue of compaſſion, imitating holy *Job**, who ſays, that compaſſion for the miſeries of others increaſed in him from his infancy. In order to a right practice of it, follow exactly the advice *Toby* gave his ſon concerning alms; and obſerve the great advantages he aſcribes to this excellent virtue. *My ſon, give alms out of thy ſubſtance, and turn not away thy face from any poor perſon: for ſo it ſhall come to paſs that the face of the Lord ſhall not be turned from thee. According to thy ability be merciful. If thou have much give abundantly: if thou have little, take care even ſo to beſtow willingly a little. For thus thou ſtoreſt up for thyſelf a good reward for the day of neceſſity. For alms deliver from all ſin, and from death, and will not ſuffer the ſoul to go into darkneſs. Alms ſhall be a great confidence before the moſt high God, to all them that give it* †. Weigh well theſe words, *Theotime*, and imprint them in your mind.

This advice teaches you many things, the firſt of which is, that young perſons are not exempt from the obligation of giving alms.

The ſecond is, that theſe alms muſt be given out of your own ſubſtance, not out of that of others, whether ſtolen, or unjuſtly acquired; but out of what is properly your own, or allowed you for your diverſions.

Thirdly, never to behave harſhly to the poor, as young perſons are too apt to do, who are often ſtrangers to all compaſſion for the miſeries of others, being entirely taken up with their pleaſures.

In fine, it teaches you that though your abilities be but ſmall, yet you are not excuſed from giving to the poor; it lays down a rule, which is to proportion your alms to your ſubſtance; if conſiderable, to give largely; if ſmall, to give little, but chearfully. For it is not the largeneſs of the alms which God regards, but the affection with which it was beſtowed; *not how much, but out of how much.* Which is to be underſtood of thoſe who have but little; for as to the rich, their alms are the ſtandard of their charity, ſince a rich man, who gives little, ſhows his compaſſion for the poor to be very ſmall.

Read

* Job. xxxi. 18. † Tob. iv. 7, 8. 9, 10, 11, 12.

Read attentively, *Theotime*, this advice, and look upon it as particularly designed for your instruction concerning alms, how you ought to behave, and what advantages you may expect from thence: by it you will learn betimes that spirit of compassion for the miseries of others, which is so amiable in youth, and perpetually draws down the blessings of heaven. You must not alledge that you have no other money but what is allowed you to spend, for it is out of that you are to give charity, depriving yourself of some little pleasure, that the necessities of the poor may be relieved. Two good works will arise from hence; you will assist the poor, and deprive yourself of some pleasure, which may contribute to atone for your sins.

## CHAP. XXIII.

### *Of humility.*

I Have reserved this virtue for the last, as that which gives perfection to all others, and which is necessary to preserve, and make them increase.

Pride, an inordinate esteem of one's self, is most pernicious to all men, but particularly to young persons; it naturally creeps into their mind, according as they advance in age, in virtue, in science, or such other perfections which they have, or think they have; it makes them incapable of all good impressions, and opens the way to all sorts of vices. *Pride creeps easily into young minds.*

*Never suffer pride to reign in thy mind, or in thy words: for from it all perdition took its beginning*, says the holy man *Toby* to his son*.

I say unto you also, *Theotime*, preserve yourself from pride, permit it not to take possession of your mind, banish it far from you. Humility is necessary for you, in suppressing the opposite vice, the cause of so much evil: Not humility of behaviour or words, but a true, solid, interior humility; an humility, which renders you humble in these three ways, in yourself, towards God, and towards men. *Three sorts of humility.*

1. Be humble in yourself, that is, in your own esteem; conceiving no inordinate esteem for yourself, according to that just remark of the wise man†, value not 1. *In one's self.*

* Tob. iv. 14. † Eccli. vi.

not your ſelf for any thing whatſoever, neither for your riches, nor for your quality, nor beauty, nor good behaviour; for the pride one takes in theſe things is mean and impertinent, and belongs only to vain minds; nor for your wit or knowledge, for theſe are the gifts of God, and you offer him an injury when you arrogate to yourſelf eſteem from thence; much leſs for virtue, for it ſprings far leſs from you, and he who glories therein, puts himſelf in danger of entirely loſing it. Beſides, we often imagine we have perfections which we have not, conſequently we are deceived if we value ourſelves for them; and when we find in ourſelves any thing valuable, we ought to give the glory to God, who is the author of it, and not to ourſelves, who have received it, and ſay from our heart: *Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to thy name give the glory**.

It is an excellent maxim of St. *Bernard*, which ought to be deeply engraven on your mind, that in all the favours God has beſtowed upon us, he has reſerved nothing to himſelf but the glory of being the author of them; and leaving to us the whole fruit of them, it is very unjuſt and criminal that we ſhould take to ourſelves the profit, and alſo the glory of them, retaining our part, and uſurping that which belongs to God, after he has declared that he would give it to no one; "*I will not give*, (ſays he) *my* "*glory to another*†. What therefore wilt thou give us, O Lord? "I give you my peace, I leave my peace to you, (ſaith he). It "ſufficeth, Lord; with thanks I receive it, and quit what thou "reſerveſt to thyſelf. I know myſelf an immenſe gainer by it. "I diſclaim all pretenſions to glory, as belonging to thee alone, "leſt I loſe what thou art pleaſed to beſtow upon me. I deſire "thy peace, and nothing more‡; *for he is our peace, who hath* "*made both one*§." Weigh this well, *Theotime*.

2. *Towards God.* 2. Be humble towards God in conſideration of his incomprehenſible greatneſs, before whom you are nothing in compariſon of that power, of that ſovereign majeſty, before which the angels themſelves tremble. Acknowledge the offences you have committed againſt this infinite greatneſs, the favours which without number you have received from his bounty, the abuſes you offered it, the account you muſt give at his judgment ſeat, the neceſſity you have of his grace for your ſalvation, with a thouſand like things, and you will find

* Pſal. cxiii. 9. † Iſaiah xlii. 8. ‡ St. Bernard, Serm. 13 in Cant. § Epheſ. ii 14.

find reaſon enough to humble, or rather annihilate yourſelf before God.

3. Be humble towards men. Some are humble towards God (for how ſhould not a wretched creature abaſe itſelf before its creator, its Lord, its judge?) but they are proud in reſpect of men, and ſo have not true humility. To practiſe this humility towards men, you ought to know there are three degrees: ſome are above you, others your equals, and others inferiors, to all whom you muſt behave with humility, but in a different manner. 3. *Towards men.*

As to the firſt, be reſpectful, tractable, and obedient to all thoſe who have any authority over you. Suffer yourſelf humbly to be reprehended; if you do otherwiſe, you are proud. Honour alſo all thoſe who ſurpaſs you in any thing, in age, in ſcience, in rank. *Reſpect towards ſuperiors.*

As for your equals, endeavour to treat them always with eſteem, with honour, with deference, without being ſelf-conceited, without being fond of reſpect, or deſiring precedency; you muſt leave theſe vanities to thoſe who affect them. *Towards equals.*

As for your inferiors, be mild and affable to all thoſe who ſerve you, conſidering them as your brethren. *And you maſters do the ſame things* (that is good) *to them* (to your ſervants) *forbearing threatnings: knowing that the Lord both of them and you is in heaven: and there is no reſpect of perſons with him* *. Shew yourſelf humble and gracious to all that are of a meaner condition than you, according to that excellent precept of the wiſe man, *make thyſelf affable to the congregation of the poor* †: Be ready to ſerve and aſſiſt them in their neceſſities. *Towards inferiors.*

In fine, a great means to repreſs pride, is to conſider what man is, his baſeneſs, his miſeries, the ſhortneſs of life, and what follows after death. *Why is earth and aſhes proud? all power is of ſhort life, a king is to day and to-morrow he ſhall die, for when a man ſhall die, he ſhall inherit ſerpents, and beaſts and worms* ‡. What a motive is this to pride!

Regard not, *Theotime*, exterior objects, which ſurround you, and raiſe your pride and vanity, but conſider what you are in yourſelf, and you will find reaſon enough to be humble; it is the advice

* Epheſ. vi. 9. † Eccli. iv. 7. ‡ Eccli. x. 9. &c.

advice St. *Bernard* * gives you in thoſe excellent verſes which I ſhall preſent to you, to meditate attentively upon.

*Youth, beauty, wealth, and this vain world's applauſe,*
*Make man forget his nature, and her laws.*
*His life's a toil, conception ſin, a pain*
*His birth, and needs muſt die. Why then ſo vain?*
*His corps will worms poſſeſs; and ſtench and dread*
*Will worms ſucceed. Man is not man when dead.*

The meaning is, that if man will conſider himſelf attentively, he will find reaſon enough to repreſs his pride; he will find that his conception involves him in ſin, his birth in miſery, that his life is a continued chain of labours, that death is an unavoidable neceſſity, and that after death he will poſſeſs nothing but ſtench, corruption and horror, as to his body. But as for his ſoul, ſhe is to be preſented before the judgment of God, to receive there the decree of her eternal happineſs or miſery; a judgment which ſhall be terrible to the greateſt ſaints. This is abundantly ſufficient to curb the pride of man, and preſerve in him a profound humility if he reflects on it: do you ſo from time to time, and learn from your infancy not to be proud, but humble and modeſt in your thoughts and actions.

* L. 9. Medit. c. 3.

*The end of the fourth part.*

# THE INSTRUCTION of YOUTH IN CHRISTIAN PIETY.

## PART V.

*Of the choice of a ſtate of life.*

THIS inſtruction would be imperfect, and deſtitute of one of the beſt and moſt neceſſary parts, if after having ſhewed how we muſt live during youth, it ſhould not direct how to make a good choice of the condition or ſtate wherein the remainder of this life is to be ſpent. This choice is a ſubject, the knowledge of which is ſo much more neceſſary to young perſons, as its importance is unknown to the greateſt part of men, and the faults that are there committed are moſt commonly irreparable; or if ſometimes they be repaired, it is with very great pains and difficulty. Beſides, ſuch faults are not light, or of ſmall conſequence, as ſhall be made to appear.

### CHAP. I.

*How important it is to make a good choice of a ſtate of life.*

THIS importance is built upon a truth, which is to be conſidered as fundamental in this matter. That though all ſtates, which are not inconſiſtent with the goſpel, may be blameleſs in themſelves, all ſtates are not ſuitable to every one. *A fundamental truth in this matter.*

God who has eſtabliſhed by his providence the diverſity of ſtates and employments for man, diſtributes them differently by his wiſdom, deſigning ſome for one employment, others for another; as

as a father of a family divides amongſt his ſervants the offices of his houſe, as he judges proper. Hence God endows men with different inclinations, and various natural abilities, as well corporal as ſpiritual; he alſo diſtributes amongſt them his graces diverſly, according to the ſeveral neceſſities of their reſpective ſtates, to which he calls them.

This truth being preſuppoſed, evidently manifeſts how important it is that perſons make a chriſtian choice of their ſtate. For if God call each man to one ſtate more particularly than another, it follows that we muſt proceed therein with great circumſpection, to chooſe what is moſt conformable to his will, and for which he has given us moſt capacity, and prepared moſt grace.

*How important the choice of a ſtate is.*

This choice is of ſuch conſequence, that on it depends all the good of man, both for this life and the next. Conſider, *Theotime*, the miſchiefs to which an ill choice of a condition of life expoſes men, and into which it will plunge you, if you be wanting to ſo important a duty.

1. *For the preſent life.*

1. For the preſent life, what good, what contentment can he expect, who has entered upon a ſtate which he has ill choſen, and for which he is no way qualified? There is no condition more miſerable. The diſpleaſure of ſeeing himſelf engaged againſt his inclination, joined with the difficulties he undergoes in ſatisfying his preſent obligations, caſts him into a perpetual diſquiet and melancholy, which render him as inſupportable to others as he is to himſelf, and make him find in his condition a more horrid priſon than that of criminals, and chains more unmerciful than thoſe of galley-ſlaves.

2. *For ſalvation.*

2. As for ſalvation, what can a man do in that ſtate? For while melancholy caſts him into a continual idleneſs, and that idleneſs into vice and perdition; with what trouble muſt he effect his ſalvation, in a ſtate wherein he has neither ability, nor a vocation from God? The want of theſe two things will occaſion an infinite number of ſins, which would not have happened in another ſtate. The defect of capacity makes him find continual difficulties in ſatisfying his duty, and the particular obligations of his ſtate. The defect of vocation is the cauſe why he wants many graces he would have received in another calling, but of which he has rendered himſelf

un-

unworthy, by raſhly entering upon this condition, without conſulting God, or ſeeking his will. Moreover, if we ſearch into the cauſe of the diſorders reigning in every ſtate, whether eccleſiaſtical, religious, or ſecular, we ſhall find the greateſt part of theſe miſchiefs to ſpring from their raſh and worldly choice of a ſtate of life.

## CHAP. II.

*Of the faults that are uſually committed by youth in this choice.*

FIRST, inſtead of chooſing a ſtate according to the rules of reaſon, and after a long and ſerious deliberation, they engage themſelves in a calling ſometimes from violence of paſſion and fancy, ſometimes from a mere incidental occurrence, and frequently from the ſole inclination they feel towards one condition rather than another, without examining whether they be qualified for it, and whether it be for their preſent and future well-being. 1. *They deliberate not.*

Secondly, they regard other ends than ſuch as they ought to have before their eyes in this deliberation. Some let their choice be determined by the agreeableneſs of that life they mean to embrace; others by riches and preferment; others by honour and reputation; in a word, all are biaſſed by human conſiderations and worldly advantage: while faith ſhould have regard to a future ſtate, few look beyond this world in what they do. A youth often ſays, this is proper to promote me in the world, and advance my fortune; nor does he ſay, it is not ſuitable to me, becauſe I foreſee I ſhall offend God in many occurrences; I ſee therein obligations I cannot ſatisfy, many occaſions and dangers of hazarding my ſoul. 2. *They deliberate ill.*

This fault is great, and againſt all reaſon; for, to deliberate wiſely of the ſtate wherein we are to ſpend our life, we muſt regard the end for which life is given us: which is the ſervice of God, and the ſalvation of our ſouls. We muſt then refer the calling we chooſe to that end; to do otherwiſe is to loſe our way at firſt ſetting out, and to ſuffer ſhipwreck in the port.

Thirdly, they only conſult with themſelves, without aſking counſel of others. This fault is as common amongſt young people, as it is ruinous and fatal: for how can they be com- 3. *Without counſel.*

petent

petent to decide upon the moſt important concern of life, in an age wherein they have neither judgment nor experience, without taking counſel of wiſe and diſcreet perſons? This cannot but be the effect of an inſupportable raſhneſs, or of an unhappy ignorance, which deſerves ſo much more compaſſion, as it is the cauſe of much evil. If the wiſe man recommends ſo much to young people; *Lean not upon thy own prudence*. My ſon, do thou nothing without counſel, and thou ſhalt not repent when thou haſt done†.* Is it not in this ſo an important affair, more than in any other, where they ought to follow this advice of the Holy Ghoſt. It is true every one ought to deliberate with himſelf in an affair of ſo great concern; he ſhould examine his own inclinations and repugnances, his own good and bad qualities. But the choice of a ſtate of life being often an obſcure, doubtful and difficult buſineſs, there is no queſtion, but youth muſt principally conſult in this affair, him who has knowledge of their conſcience; there being none who can ſee more clearly, what ſhould on that occaſion be reſolved upon than he. Moreover, God having deputed parents over their children, it is a regular way for children to conſult their parents, for diſcovering the will of God in this intricate matter. To the counſel of the director and the advice of parents, may be added the opinion of ſome other perſons, provided that theſe principally regard the ſalvation of him, whom they counſel, that they conſider things maturely, and that they have no intereſt in his embracing one calling rather than another.

4. *They conſult not God.*

Laſtly, they conſult not him who ought to be conſulted above all others, *viz.* God himſelf: they have no recourſe to him by prayer, humbly to implore his holy inſpirations, and grace to know his will, although it be by him alone that they can ſucceed well in this choice. He is the father of lights, he is the author of good counſels. Beſides, it belongs to him to give us our calling, and the employment wherein he would have us ſerve him. He expects we ſhould have recourſe to him and adviſe with him in important affairs; he accounts himſelf offended when we are defective therein, and frequently permits ſuch enterprizes to miſcarry, to the confuſion of thoſe who will not ſeek his will. See a convincing example.

The *Iſraelites*, deſirous to fly the perſecution of their enemies, took a reſolution to return into *Egypt*, of their own heads, without con-

* Prov. iii. 5. † Eccli. xxxii. 24.

consulting God to know what they should do. He reproached them exceedingly by his prophet, and threatened them that their design should not succeed, but have a dreadful issue, as in effect it had. *Wo to you apostate children, saith the Lord, that would take counsel, and not of me: and would begin a web, and not by my spirit, that you might add sin upon sin; who walk to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at my mouth, hoping for help in the strength of Pharao, and trusting in the shadow of Egypt. And the strength of Pharao shall be to your confusion, and the confidence of the shadow of Egypt to your shame* *. I wish that all those who deliberate of the choice of their state, had frequently these words in their memory. Every method of consulting God in this choice of a state of life, is not however effectual; if persons desire to secure a proper answer from heaven in this their consultation, they should lead a good life during the time of youth. The sins of youth are the ordinary cause of the bad election many make of their condition. *Saul*, the first King of *Israel*, is a terrible example of this truth: this prince had excited the circler of God against him by his disobedience and ingratitude. One day finding himself reduced to a great extremity, and not knowing what to resolve on, he consulted God. *But the Lord answered him not neither by dreams, nor by priests, nor by prophets* †. Prompted by despair, he then consults a witch, and that wicked method is so far permitted to succeed, that from the Ghost of *Samuel*, who appeared to him, he learns his destiny; that the Lord had departed from him in punishment of his disobedience, and that on the morrow he should die together with his sons. What a frightful example is this! How clearly does it manifest, that God abandons men in their most urgent necessities in punishment of former sins. If then, *Theotime*, you be not already at the age of choosing your state take care to draw down by a virtuous life, the blessing of God, when you consult him. But if your life has been disorderly, do penance, and be converted to God with your whole heart, that your sins may not cause God to desert you in this choice.

## CHAP. III.

*Advice to parents concerning the vocation of their children.*

A Little experience in the world demonstrates how often parents are to blame in this important affair. Some leave



* Isai. xxx. 1, 2, 3. † 1 Kings xxviii. 6.

their children to act as they pleaſe on this occaſion; but the number is much more conſiderable of thoſe who eſteeming it, as it certainly is, an affair of the utmoſt importance, interpoſe parental influence far otherwiſe than they ought. Theſe lay it down as a principle, that parents have a right, from their authority and experience, to aſſign for their children a ſtate of life.

Upon this ground they uſurp the power of predetermining their children to ſome way of life they themſelves fancy before the proper time comes, and preſently diſcover their intentions, and endeavour to engage them in it.

This method would not be entirely wrong, if they obſerved ſome regularity in it, and deſiſted from their importunities when they meet with obſtacles that ought to have their weight; ſuch as their childrens repugnance, or incapacity for ſuch ſtates. All good parents act thus who truly love their children, and have no other view than their real good and ſalvation.

But the truth is, too many are guilty of this invaſion upon their children's liberty, and are bent upon the execution of their deſigns, notwithſtanding the diſlike or incapacity of their children, ſetting all engines at work to compaſs them. At firſt mildneſs and perſuaſion are employed, diſplaying the advantages of the condition they have pitched upon: but when theſe fail, they have recourſe to threats and ill-uſage to enforce a compliance.

Hence, how many while yet helpleſs babes are doomed to ſome particular profeſſion, before their opening reaſon can underſtand, much leſs prudently determine upon that choice. Hence, a concern where the moſt wary circumſpection ſhould apprehend a falſe ſtep, becomes the ſubject of childiſh entertainment. The tongues of children having been taught to liſp the irrevocable name of their future engagement, and their tender minds accuſtomed to receive the ſame repeated ſuggeſtions, their own determination paſſed in riper years is nothing more than the effect of a forced impreſſion grown up with themſelves.

Such methods, ſo oppoſite to reaſon and religion, are owing to parents having views not conſiſtent with their children's perſonal good. Oftentimes family intereſt influences them: ſometimes a particular inclination to favour one to the prejudice of another: or laſtly, ſelf-love makes them conſult their own advantage, and neglect that of their children.

Such

Such methods are oppoſite to reaſon and religion. This parents would be convinced of, if they conſulted the one and the other with ſincerity and diſintereſtedneſs.

Reaſon teaches them, that man being naturally free, and maſter of his own actions, no power on earth can oblige him to what is contrary to his good, eſpecially where an engagement for life is in queſtion; unleſs by his crimes he is obnoxious to ſuch an engagement, or by the chance of war he is fallen into ſlavery; neither of which can be the caſe we treat of.

Reaſon will likewiſe inform them, that as parents they are obliged by the law of nature to promote their children's welfare to the utmoſt of their abilities; to which nothing can be more oppoſite than to engage them in ſtates improper for them. Their own experience will extort from theſe domineering parents this avowal, that they would be very ſorry to be uſed by others, as they uſe the children of their own bowels; and that the firſt kind of injuſtice is doing by others what we are unwilling to undergo ourſelves. In fine, reaſon will ſhow them that they behave worſe to their children than to their ſervants, ſince they muſt own they would not willingly employ a ſervant, who remained in their ſervice only by compulſion, or was not otherwiſe duly qualified; and conſequently they muſt confeſs their own injuſtice in regard of their children, whom they engage in ſtates not ſuitable to their inclinations, or natural capacities.

If after conſulting reaſon they will hearken to the voice of religion, they will find that parents are not only anſwerable for the temporal advantages of their children, but much more for their ſpiritual good; and that as both the one and the other is cloſely connected with the ſtate of life they undertake, parents are reſponſible to God for their childrens ſalvation, if they engage them in a ſtate incompatible with it.

It will ſhow them, that God will demand of them an account of the ſins of their children, engaged in a ſtate againſt their will, and without the neceſſary qualifications for the diſcharge of their duties: and that if God puniſhes ſo rigorouſly the neglect of parents in correcting their children (as in the caſe of *Heli* the high prieſt *) they muſt expect the worſt of puniſhments if they actually contribute to their childrens ſins, by engaging them in improper ſtates, from whence thoſe ſins ariſe.



* 1 Kings Chap. iv.

It will likewiſe convince them, that if, according to the Apoſtle*, they are forbid to uſe too much harſhneſs in governing their children, for fear of diſheartening them in the way of virtue, much leſs ought they to engage their children in ſtates diſagreeable to them, and which will occaſion numberleſs crimes. Blind parents! with all your foreſight in worldly affairs, can you be ſo much in the dark where your ſouls are concerned? Shall ambition, intereſt, or paſſion prevail upon you to treat thoſe ſo cruelly, whom the law of God and nature commands you to love? To aggrandize ſome in the world, where perhaps they will fall into the depth of iniquity, will ye hazard the ſalvation of the others, and render your own deſperate?

The ſame religion, if they vouchſafe to conſult it, will inform them, that there are obligations eſſential to each of the three general ſtates, eccleſiaſtical, religious, and worldly, on account of which they ought neither directly nor indirectly to lay any conſtraint on their children.

As to the eccleſiaſtical ſtate, religion will teach them, that no one ought to engage therein unleſs called by God, and that parents who induce their children to it without a vocation, reſiſt the appointments of God, and hazard the eternal welfare of their children. Beſides, in this ſtate they are obliged to perpetual chaſtity, a daily recital of the canonical hours, and a more than ordinary ſanctified life. Such an engagement muſt be entirely voluntary, not impoſed by others, not even parents, who have no ſuch authority: and if they do, they muſt expect to ſhare in the guilt of all the tranſgreſſions againſt ſuch duties.

The ſame, or rather more may be ſaid in regard of a religious ſtate, wherein, by three ſolemn vows, they are obliged to perform three great things, perpetual chaſtity, poverty, and obedience. The ſight of which ought to make parents tremble when their children engage of their own accord, much more if they have promoted it, or by promiſes and threats unjuſtly contrived it. Can any thing equal ſuch cruelty, as to engage children in ſuch arduous obligations againſt their will for their whole lives, and render their ſalvation almoſt impracticable?

As for a married ſtate, parents have no authority to force their children to it, much leſs to marry a perſon they do not like. It is a contract which neceſſarily requires an entire liberty and mutual affection: and as it is for life, if inſtead of mutual love, any averſion

* Coloſſ. iii. 21.

sion or oppoſite ſentiments go with it, it proves a melancholy engagement attended with infinite miſeries, ſcarce to be imagined but by thoſe who have experienced them, and which muſt draw down the wrath of God on ſuch parents who gave occaſion to them.

Notwithſtanding that parents are here condemned for taking too much upon themſelves in determining the vocation of their children, parents are certainly allowed to direct the proceedings of their children, in that critical juncture. They are not only allowed, but as far as able they are obliged to aſſiſt them on that occaſion with their advice: to induce them, if neceſſary, by exhortation, or to correct them by remonſtrances and reprimands; parents muſt entreat the divine goodneſs to preſerve their tender offspring from thoſe dreadful precipices to which unthinking youth is expoſed. The active part of parents in their children's choice of a ſtate of life, ſhould be proportionable to their intereſt in it, as their intereſt is proportionable to their reſponſibility. Their zealous endeavours ſhould be the warmeſt exertions which divine charity in union with parental affection invigorates, keeping heaven ever in view, and ſuffering no human motive to intervene which cannot be made ſubſervient to everlaſting felicity.

I entreat parents, who read this advice, to do it with that reflection which is required in a matter of ſuch importance, as it does not leſs affect their own ſalvation, than that of their children.

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## CHAP. IV.

*Of the different ſtates of life, and firſt of the eccleſiaſtical ſtate.*

THAT you may better deliberate on the calling you ought to chooſe, it is ſeaſonable that I ſhould ſpeak of the principal ſtates, and propoſe the moſt important things you muſt conſider in each of them.

I begin with the eccleſiaſtical ſtate, concerning which you ought to reflect attentively upon three things.

1. How great its obligations and dangers are.
2. The vocation you muſt have to it.
3. The preparation you muſt bring with you.

### ARTICLE I.

*Of the obligations and dangers of an eccleſiaſtical ſtate.*

OF all ſtates of life, that of an eccleſiaſtic is the higheſt, and moſt elevated. It is the calling which approaches

neareſt to God, and which God has eſtabliſhed to interpoſe betwixt him and men, and by the mediation whereof he communicates himſelf to them. His ſon *Jeſus Chriſt* has committed to its truſt all that is moſt perfect and dear to him; the miniſtry of his word, the diſpenſation of his divine myſteries, the adminiſtration of his ſacraments, the government of the church, in fine, the ſalvation of ſouls, which he has redeemed by the price of his blood; a ſtate whereof the functions ſurpaſs all thoſe of angels, who look upon them with a profound reſpect, eſteeming them infinitely above their power, and the dignity of their celeſtial nature.

*The obligations of an eccleſiaſtical ſtate.*

This ſo exalted a ſtate ought not to ſwell Eccleſiaſtics with vanity, but to fill them with much fear and trembling; for as it is high, it brings with it vaſt obligations.

1. It obliges them to a great ſanctity; becauſe they approach to God in their miniſtry, they are obliged to be holy. *I will be ſanctified*, ſays he, *in them that approach to me**. *Be holy, becauſe I am holy*†. For this reaſon St. *Thomas* ſays‡, "That the ſanctity "required for this ſtate, ought to be greater than that of a reli- "gious ſtate."

They are not only obliged to a particular and hidden ſanctity, ſuch as that of other Chriſtians, but to an exemplary ſanctity, which ſerves as a light to others. They are deſigned to enlighten others by their lives, as well as words. The Son of God ſaid particularly to them, *You are the light of the world. Let your light ſo ſhine before men, that they may ſee your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven*§. And the council of *Trent* ſays excellently¶, "There is nothing more effectually moves others to piety and "to the worſhip of God, than the life and example of thoſe, who "have undertaken the ſacred miniſtry.... Wherefore it becomes "all the clergy, who are called into the lot of our Lord, ſo to "frame their life and morals, that in their habit, behaviour, "manner of walking, diſcourſe, and all other things they ſhew "nothing, but what is grave, moderate and religious: and as for "leſſer failings, which in them would be very great, they are to "be careful to be exempt from them."

The other obligation of Eccleſiaſtics, is to co-operate in the ſalvation of ſouls; they are eſtabliſhed for that end, and without a crime they cannot diſpenſe with it; it is an abuſe to believe, that only curates are charged with that obligation. All incumbents and Eccleſiaſtics

* Lev. x. 3. † Lev. xi. 44. ‡ 2. 2. q. 138. a. 8. § Mat. v. 14, 16. ¶ Seſſ. 21. c. 1.

Eccleſiaſtics are obliged to this labour. St. *Paul* ſays, They are *your ſervants*, that is, the ſervants of the faithful *. The oblations are given to them by the faithful for that intent. And St. *Gregory* ſays †, "They ought to conſider how criminal and puniſhable a "thing it is, to receive the fruit of labour without labour. St. "*Jerome* ſays, that prieſts ſhall not only render an account of "their own ſins, but of the ſins of all thoſe whoſe goods they "abuſe, living on their goods, and not taking any care of their "ſalvation ‡."

"St. *Bernard* adds a dreadful thing, that at the univerſal judg-"ment we ſhall hear the complaints and lamentations of people, "who ſhall rigorouſly accuſe the Eccleſiaſtics before the tribunal "of God, as deceivers, for having lived on their goods, without "applying themſelves to the expiation of their ſins; for having "been blind guides, and unfaithful mediators of their ſalvation; "for having caſt them into a precipice, inſtead of conducting "them to eternal life §."

O *Theotime*, read attentively, and weigh well the ſentiments of theſe great ſaints, touching this obligation of Eccleſiaſtics, to engrave them deeply in your heart, and advantage yourſelf by them, when you ſhall be entered into an Eccleſiaſtical ſtate.

*The dangers of an Eccleſiaſtical ſtate.*

From theſe two ſo ſtrict obligations, ſpring two extreme dangers in this ſtate. The one is, of not being endowed with the ſanctity it requires, but corrupted by the ſpirit and maxims of the world, and much more by the contagion of many Eccleſiaſtics, who lead a life far removed from the perfection of their ſtate. The other danger is, of falling into that idleneſs common to Eccleſiaſtics; which making them neglect the labour to which their calling obliges them, renders them very guilty in the ſight of God, and moreover leads them into many diſorders and vices, whereof it is ordinarily the mother.

To theſe two dangers muſt be added a third, which conſiſts in the management of their revenues, which cannot without a mortal ſin be employed in wicked, or even in ſuperfluous expences, as in delicacies, in good chear, in vanities, in exceſſes of feaſts, dreſs, moveables, and other like things; nor in enriching their relations, or heaping up treaſures, which often draw the viſible curſe of God upon thoſe who hoard them up. Incumbents are forbidden



* 2 Cor. iv. 5. † Hom. 1 in Evang. ‡ In c. 44. Ezech. § In Declamat.

all these things. And it is an undoubted truth, that they cannot receive from their benefices more than their sufficient and modest maintenance, the rest ought to be employed in alms and pious works. Many divines hold they are bound to restitution, when they dispose of it otherwise; and the generality condemn them at least as guilty of a mortal sin.

## ARTICLE II.

### *Of the vocation to an Ecclesiastical state.*

*There must be a vocation to an Ecclesiastical state.*

THE Ecclesiastical state being so holy and eminent, must certainly require a vocation from God. This is the great maxim of the Apostle. *Neither doth any man take the honour to himself, but he that is called by God, as Aaron was* *. A maxim which he confirms by the adorable example of *Jesus Christ*, who being by himself, and by his dignity of Son of God, a priest, would not take upon himself the quality of sovereign high-priest, but received it from him, who from all eternity said to him, *Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee;* and in the moment of his incarnation said to him, *Thou art a priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedech.*

This example of *Jesus Christ* ought to confound all those who have the boldness to intrude themselves by their own motion, without a divine call, drawing upon themselves by this impudence, the wrath of God, a denial of his graces, and the certain loss of their eternal salvation.

This being so, *Theotime*, you may very well judge with what care you ought to examine your vocation, if you deliberate on an Ecclesiastical state. To succeed happily therein, see what you are to do: you must know whether the motion and inclination you feel to an Ecclesiastical state come from God; for if it come from him, it is a vocation, but if it comes not from him, it is an illusion and deceit of the Devil, whereby he means to ruin you.

To know whether this motion comes from God, you must examine two things. 1. What intention inclines you to this state. 2. Whether you have the requisite dispositions.

As to the intention, if it be bad, it is certain your motion comes not from God; for he cannot be the author of any ill. Now it is bad, if you have for the mark at which you aim, any of these ends;

* Heb. v. 4.

ends; to live more at your eaſe in an Eccleſiaſtical ſtate; to find therein repoſe, idleneſs, or delights; to heap up riches; to be honoured and eſteemed by men. All theſe motives are bad, and if you have any ſuch, your vocation is not from God, but rather from the Devil. This truth is learned from St. *Bernard* in thoſe remarkable words worthy of the greateſt attention: "All thoſe, ſays "he, who in Eccleſiaſtical orders ſeek either honour or riches, or "the pleaſures of this life; and in a word, who ſeek their intereſt, and not that of *Jeſus Chriſt*, without doubt are not moved "to this ſtate by charity, which is from God, but by covetouſneſs, which is the enemy of God, and the ſource of all evil *."

*Two ends which make an Eccleſiaſtical ſtate good.*

Your intention then muſt be good, and to be ſo, it muſt have for its end, the ſanctification of your own ſoul, and the ſalvation of your neighbour's, which are the two general obligations of that calling. That is, you ſhould propoſe to yourſelf to live in that ſtate a holy and exemplary life, and contribute to the ſalvation of ſouls by your prayers, labour, and all poſſible means, according to the ſame St. *Bernard*, who ſays, "that he who would enter into the orders of the church, "and be received into the miniſtry of the ſanctuary, ought to "have this intention, to approach to God with an abſolute diſ"engagement from the things of this world, in a perfect purity "of mind and body, to be illuminated by him, and procure therein "his own ſalvation, and that of his neighbour, by applying himſelf to prayer, and to the diſpenſation of the word of God."

But it is not ſufficient to have a good intention, you muſt alſo be fit for it. There are two ſorts of defects which make a man improper for that calling, the defects of the mind, and the corruption of life and manners. We ſhall not ſpeak of thoſe of the body, whereof ſome render a man irregular, that is, incapable, according to the canons of the church, of being admitted to orders. The defects of the mind are dullneſs or ſtupidity, rudeneſs, levity, ignorance, and other like, which viſibly render a man incapable of diſcharging eccleſiaſtical duties. Such defects, when they cannot be corrected by age and application, are contrary to an eccleſiaſtical calling, and apparently diſcover that a man is not called to it.

The ſame is to be ſaid of the corruption of manners. Every one who has lived in ſin, or is ſtill ſubject to any conſiderable vice, as impurity, drunkenneſs, ſwearing, revenge, covetouſneſs, ambition, and

* In Declamationibus.

and other like faults, ought not to believe himself fit, or called by God to an ecclesiastical life, except he has corrected his former manners by a long penance, and has entirely mortified his passions, and conquered his bad inclinations by contrary virtues.

## ARTICLE III.

### *Of the preparation necessary for an ecclesiastical state.*

*There must be a preparation to an ecclesiastical state, by a virtuous and holy life.*

PReparation is the third thing you have to consider in deliberating on an ecclesiastical state, and so much more necessary, as it frequently happens, that they who aspire to this state do not think themselves obliged to be prepared for it a long time before by a virtuous and holy life. This is an error so much the more to be deplored, as it is very common, and the reason why ecclesiastics dishonour this state by their life is, because engaging themselves therein without this preparation, it is no wonder if they lead as they did before, a worldly, and oftentimes a most vicious life.

*Proofs of this truth.*

To disabuse you, *Theotime*, of this error, it is sufficient to represent to you the sanctity of that state: for if it be so holy and sublime,

*By the sanctity of the state.*

it is an infallible consequence, that you must prepare yourself for it by a holy life; and to enter into orders with a soul still subject to sin, and full of vicious habits, is to contemn it, and to offer a most heinous injury to it: it is to put yourself into the greatest danger of dishonouring it by a life unworthy of it, and contrary to the sanctity it requires, and to meet with inevitable perdition.

*By convincing authority.*

To convince you of the necessity of this preparation, I shall give you here the sentiments of the fathers, and of the church herself upon this subject.

St. *Gregory* the great says*, "That we must ascend unto orders "by order; for he seeks to fall down, who desiring to mount up "to a high place, leaves the ordinary degrees to ascend by rough "and craggy ways." And he adds an excellent comparison: "For as timber is not proper to be employed in building when it "is yet green, and newly come out of the forest, except it be "dried and seasoned a long time; otherwise it rather serves to "ruin the building than support it." Thus they ought not to be advanced

* Lib. 7. Epist. 182.

advanced to ſacred orders, who have lately been engaged in ſin, except all their wicked habits have been corrected by a long and ſerious penance.

St. *Jerome**, ſpeaking of an eccleſiaſtical ſtate, ſays, "Wo be "to him who enters therein without the nuptial robe of ſanctity." He further adds, "Let every one examine and prove himſelf, "and not approach before that trial. Eccleſiaſtical dignity doth "not make a Chriſtian nor a virtuous man," ſuch an one as an eccleſiaſtic ought to be.

St. *Bernard*, in many places of his works, is full of complaints and invectives againſt thoſe who enter thus into orders, without bringing with them the preparation of a holy life experienced in virtue. He ſays, it is an inſupportable impudence in thoſe who do it, and that it is the ſource of all the diſorders of eccleſiaſtics †.

St. *Thomas* eſtabliſhed this difference between ſacred orders and a religious ſtate, that to enter into religion it is not neceſſary to be exerciſed before-hand in virtue; but to enter into orders it is required: and he brings this reaſon, "Becauſe ſacred orders require "a previous ſanctity, which the ſtate of religion does not, which "is an exerciſe inſtituted to attain unto ſanctity ‡."

All theſe authorities are clear, and admit of no reply. Give ear to that of the whole church ſpeaking in the council of *Trent*.

The ſacred council, after it had determined the age wherein one might receive holy orders, adds §, "That all thoſe are not capable "of orders who have attained to that age, but only thoſe who are "worthy of it, and whoſe approved life is a certain old age;" that is, they ſhould make amends for their age by the wiſdom of their life, and ſanctity of their manners, according to that maxim of the wiſe man, which ſays, that *The underſtanding of a man is grey hairs: and a ſpotleſs life is old age* ¶.

After all theſe authorities there is no reaſon to doubt of the neceſſity of this preparation to an eccleſiaſtical ſtate, but rather to be both aſtoniſhed and ſorry to ſee it ſo ill obſerved. Be not guilty, *Theotime*, of this fault; but if you aim at an eccleſiaſtical ſtate, uſe all endeavours to prepare, and render yourſelf worthy of it.

At the ſame time that you prepare yourſelf for an eccleſiaſtical ſtate by a virtuous life, remember to join with the exerciſes of piety, diligent application to ſtudy, in order to qualify yourſelf for ſerving God in that calling.

2. *By the ſtudy of ſciences neceſſary for an eccleſiaſtic.*

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* Epiſt. 1. † Lib. de Converſione ad clericos. c. 19. ‡ 2. 2. qu. 180. ar. 1.
§ Seſſ. 25. c. 12. ¶ Wiſd. iv. 8, 9.

This labour is no leſs neceſſary for an eccleſiaſtical ſtate than that of ſanctity. You are obliged to it in conſcience, and if you apply not yourſelf carefully to it, you render yourſelf unworthy of that calling: *Becauſe thou haſt rejected knowledge*, ſaith the Almighty, *I will reject thee that thou ſhalt not do the office of prieſthood to me**. And moreover, you render yourſelf guilty in the ſight of God, of all the miſchiefs which happen through your ignorance.

*The great evils which ſpring from the ignorance of prieſts.*

The ignorance of prieſts is the greateſt evil that can be found in the church, it being the chief cauſe of the corruption of the people, and loſs of ſouls. It is impoſſible but that an ignorant eccleſiaſtic ſhould be ſlothful and idle, not being able to apply himſelf to his ſtudies, and that idleneſs ſhould lead him into vice, as we daily ſee. Now although he ſhould not be vicious, idleneſs alone is criminal in a prieſt. Add the miſchiefs which the ignorance of eccleſiaſtics cauſes with reſpect to the people: it either hinders them from labouring for the ſalvation of ſouls, or doing it effectually (from whence the people ſuffer much, loſing the aſſiſtance they ought to receive from them for their eternal ſalvation) or occaſions the loſs of many ſouls by their not being inſtructed in what appertains to ſalvation, and the way that leads to it. It is not to be conceived how many ſouls are loſt by the ignorance of prieſts. "The "church (ſays St. *Bernard*†) hath daily a great and lamentable "experience of the danger ſouls are expoſed unto, when the paſtor "wants wherewith to feed his ſheep, when the guide knows not "the way by which he ſhould conduct them to ſalvation, nor the "ſervant the will of his maſter, which he ought to declare to "others."

Dear *Theotime*, reflect well upon theſe truths, and be afraid, leſt by your ignorance you make yourſelf the cauſe of the ruin of ſouls redeemed by the blood of *Jeſus Chriſt*. Apply yourſelf ſeriouſly to the ſtudy neceſſary for an eccleſiaſtic, and endeavour to qualify yourſelf the beſt you can for that ſtate to which God has called you.

*An important advice.*

In fine, whether in deliberating on this ſtate, or preparing yourſelf for it, ſet frequently before your eyes thoſe excellent words of St. *Auguſtine*, writing to a friend of his, who aſked his advice concerning an eccleſiaſtical ſtate. "I intreat you, "(ſays

* Oſee iv. 6. † In Declam.

" (says he) before all things, that in your virtuous wisdom you " will consider well that there is nothing in this life, and princi- " pally at this time, more easy, more light, and more acceptable " to men, than the duty of a bishop, of a priest, or of a " deacon, if it be negligently discharged; yet there is nothing " more miserable, more dreadful, and more damnable in the sight " of God. Besides, there is nothing in this life, and at this time, " more difficult, more painful, and more dangerous, than the " office of a bishop, priest, or deacon, if they acquit themselves " of it as they ought, and according to the will of our master; as " also there is nothing more happy in the sight of God*."

## CHAP. V.

### *Of a religious state.*

AFTER the ecclesiastical state I come to the religious, the choice whereof is of no less consequence than that of the former, nor subject to less faults.

To make a good choice of this state two things are necessary; 1. To know the nature of it. 2. To know whether one be called to it.

### ARTICLE I.

*What a religious state is; its obligations, advantages, and dangers.*

A Religious life, according to St. *Thomas*, is " An institution established for the " acquiring of interior sanctity." For this end persons leave the world, and oblige themselves to observe an exact chastity, renouncing all carnal pleasures not only in affection, but in effect; a perfect poverty, removed from the possession of, as well as the affection to earthly goods; and an entire abnegation of their own will, to follow the will of their superiors; that thus disengaged they may with more freedom apply themselves to spiritual exercises. They moreover oblige themselves to comply minutely with their rule, and to sanctify their souls by the practice of Christian virtues. *A religious state.* *Its obligations.*

As the obligations of this state are strict, so the advantages annexed to it are singular; St. *Bernard*† describes them as follows: " In reli- " gion a man lives more purely, is raised more readily, walks more " cautiously, *Its advantages.*

* Ep. 184. † Lib de modo bene. vivendi. Serm. 66.

" cautiouſly, is more frequently refreſhed with divine grace, re-
" poſes with more ſecurity, dies with leſs fear, is ſooner purged
" in the other life, and more abundantly recompenſed in heaven."
But this is to be underſtood, as he himſelf ſays, of a religious ſtate that is obſerved in a holy manner.

*Its dangers.* This ſtate has likewiſe not ſmall dangers; the ſame St. *Bernard* reduces them to three.

The firſt danger is of falling into pride, and a good opinion of one's ſelf.

The ſecond is, the danger of returning into the world, either in effect, or at leaſt in deſire.

The third is, of growing negligent in the exerciſe of a religious life. This being a way, as the ſame ſaint obſerves, wherein one muſt either advance, or fall back.

The firſt of theſe dangers generally originates from this, that men judge of ſanctity by the exterior, not reflecting that it conſiſts in thoſe virtues which adorn the ſoul, and chiefly in the practice of humility. The other two dangers moſt frequently ariſe from converſing with the world, which is infinitely dangerous to religious perſons, as St. *Bernard* ſays. And all three proceed from a want of a true vocation to religion.

## ARTICLE II.

*How to know whether one be called to a religious ſtate.*

*Firſt means.* FIRST, if you perceive in yourſelf a ſtrong inclination to that ſtate, be careful not to reject it, becauſe perhaps it is a vocation from God; and not to embrace it ſuddenly, becauſe it may be only a human ſentiment. Take a good ſpace of time to examine your inclination, and during that time, attend to what God ſhall ſay to your ſoul, according to that expreſſion of the prophet, *I will hear what the Lord God will ſpeak in me* *. But you ſhould refrain from any converſation with thoſe, who would induce you to become a religious; otherwiſe you will not diſcern whether your inclination comes from the inſpiration of God, or the perſuaſion of men.

*Second means.* 2dly, Beg daily of God with great earneſtneſs, that he would be pleaſed to make his will known to you, ſaying with St. *Paul, Lord what wilt thou have me to do* †?.

3dly,

* Pſalm lxxxiv. 9. † Act. ix. 6.

3dly, Examine diligently, 1. The obligations, advantages, and dangers of a religious life, of which we have already ſpoken. 2. The intention you ſhould bring to this ſtate. The intention muſt be to withdraw yourſelf from the world in order to do penance, and to be ſanctified interiorly by the practice of virtue: if any other motive incline you to that calling, your deſign is not from God. Examine alſo whether you be fit for it in body and mind. Yet above all things reſolve not without conſulting ſome prudent, and diſintereſted perſon, particularly your ſpiritual director. Many young people throw themſelves into the noviceſhip too haſtily; whence it often happens that being obliged to leave it, they are looked upon by the world as inconſtant, contemned as people fit for nothing, or, what is too common, quitting a religious habit, they alſo forſake virtue; or elſe, aſhamed to depart from the convent, they engage in a religious order unadviſedly, and without a vocation; and under the appearance of virtue they lead a worldly life, full of vices, until from great diſorders they are ſometimes puſhed on to apoſtacy. *Third means.*

It is then a matter of the greateſt conſequence to follow the admonition of St. *John*, *believe not every ſpirit, but try the ſpirits whether they be of God* *; eſpecially as St. *Paul* teaches that *Satan* himſelf, that ſpirit of darkneſs, *transformeth himſelf into an Angel of light* †.

*Marks of a vocation.*

The marks of a vocation are three; humility, peace of mind, and perſeverance. By *humility*, I underſtand that virtue which makes us wholly diſtruſt our own judgment in an affair of ſuch importance, to follow that of wiſer perſons. By *peace of mind*, I mean a diſpoſition to follow the will of God on what ſide ſoever it may incline, when we ſhall ſufficiently have learned it. By *perſeverance*, I underſtand the long continuance of an inſpiration, that is, at leaſt for ſix months or a year, amidſt the obſtacles and difficulties which occur.

If your inclination to a religious ſtate does not continue, it is a ſign it was only a human motion, or a pious thought inſpired by heaven inciting you to virtue in the ſtate you fix upon. But if you reſolve to embrace a religious life, remember to prefer amongſt monaſtic inſtitutes and religious houſes, that wherein a regular conduct is moſt exactly obſerved, that wherein the profeſſed members

* 1 John iv. 1. † 2 Cor. xi. 14.

bers labour to gain ſolid piety, and, as much as you can, that wherein there is leaſt communication with the world.

## CHAP. VI.

### *Of the divers ſtates of a ſecular life.*

AS the life of eccleſiaſtics and that of religious has it dangers, a ſecular life has alſo its perils, which are not inconſiderable. He who deliberates on it, ought to foreſee them. Theſe dangers are different according to the reſpective ſtates.

*Gentry. Dangers of this condition.*

If there be a difficult and hazardous condition, it is the life of thoſe whom the world calls great, that of perſons, publicly inveſted with ſuch power and authority, as uſually attends a plentiful fortune, poſſeſſed of any degree of dignity or elevation over private perſons, to whom honour, reſpect, deference and attendance are paid, and are otherwiſe in full enjoyment of riches and the pleaſures of this life; this ſtate, I ſay, is full of dangers and precipices, very difficult to be avoided by thoſe, who are expoſed thereto. Ordinary virtues are there ſo eaſily corrupted, and the moſt ſolid ſhaken, that few give hopes of their living in a ſtate of ſalvation. Being too often addicted to thoſe vices hinted at Part III. c. x. and xi. their ill conduct forms a poiſon that ſpreads itſelf and infects all thoſe around them. Their friendſhip has been fatal to many, whom their paſſions have drawn into ſin. They not only tolerate ſwearing, curſing, drinking, ſinful diſcourſe and immodeſty in thoſe who are under their controul, but too often are themſelves the examples of theſe vices. Their depraved judgment preſumes to fix the ſtandard of a Chriſtian life which they vainly think can be reconciled with a worldly ſpirit. Here you will meet a baſe flattering of thoſe whom fortune ſmiles upon, falſe friendſhip and diſſimulation, which ſhew a pleaſing countenance to thoſe whom they hate in their heart, and thus miſtake common civility for the practice of the love of their neighbour. But what gives riſe to the general depravity of this ſtate is ſuch a ſelf-conceit, that they ſtand above correction, and think themſelves only placed in this world to be reſpected, waited upon and idolized by inferiors. Hence all who foreſee themſelves deſigned by providence for this high but ſlippery ſtation,

*Duties of this ſtate.*

ſtation, muſt ſtand in great fear, and arm themſelves with great precaution againſt the dangers of that life: 1ſt, By being grounded in perfect humility, being convinced of their want of extraordinary grace to bear the weight of honour, and not ſuffer their heart to cleave to it. 2dly, By being reſolved to live in this elevated ſtation in fear and trembling, having always before their eyes the great extent of their obligations and the divine judgments, which ſhall be more rigorous, the more they abuſe his bleſſings. 3dly, By earneſtly endeavouring to ſurpaſs private perſons in ſolid virtue, rather than by any worldly excellence. 4thly, By daily imploring heaven, that their talents, liberal education, degree of ſuperiority, authority, riches, honours, and ſuch other bleſſings received, may not by an ill uſe become to them ſo many curſes. 5thly, By not ſetting their affections upon pleaſure, greatneſs, eſteem, riches, ſo as to let theſe draw them from the concern of ſalvation, or leſſen their faith and hope in God. 6thly, By never proſtituting their power, authority, riches, or influence, to encourage or promote idleneſs, intemperance or any other vice, much leſs to oppreſs the poor or make the innocent groan under the injuſtice or tyranny of their capricious humour. Laſtly, by frequent and fervent prayer, by approaching the ſacraments, by taking advice in all matters of importance, by reading good books, and by copying in their life the examples of all thoſe ſaints, who worked out their ſalvation in the ſame exalted rank.

*Profeſſion of arms.*

But no condition is more dangerous, as no condition is more corrupt, than the profeſſion of arms.

Amongſt the vices which reign in this profeſſion, there are five very common, and very enormous. The firſt is, a general prophaneneſs and irreligion, which make them contemn the ſervice of God and their own ſalvation, and are too often the forerunners to impiety and atheiſm. The ſecond, an execrable cuſtom of ſwearing and blaſpheming. The third, an unbridled impurity, which reigns in that calling more than any other. The fourth, an unaccountable paſſion for duelling, which ſacrifices to the Devil and eternal flames a vaſt number of that profeſſion. The fifth conſiſts in rapine, unjuſt exactions, violences, and ill treating thoſe who cannot reſiſt.

It is a moſt difficult thing to be of that profeſſion, and not to fall into theſe vices: the wiſeſt and moſt virtuous learn them

ſooner or later, and are corrupted at laſt by the example or perſuaſion of others.

O *Theotime*, if ſome inevitable obligation drives you into that ſtate, know, that you cannot ſufficiently apprehend your danger; and if you would prevent your eternal ruin, you have need of arming yourſelf powerfully againſt theſe enemies, and dangers which environ you.

1. Embrace not that calling but with reaſon, and for a good cauſe; as becauſe your birth obliges you thereto, or for the benefit of the public, or other good reaſon, and not through caprice and licentiouſneſs, from idleneſs and ſloth, from a deſire of raiſing your fortune, much leſs of enriching yourſelf by ſpoils, robberies, and extortions. Theſe are the moſt ordinary motives of thoſe who ſettle in that condition, and the cauſe of its reigning evils.

2. Make a reſolution to live like a virtuous man, fearing God, flying the particular vices of that profeſſion, not concerning yourſelf about what others ſhall ſay of you; they will cauſe you ſome trouble in the beginning, but at the end you will get above them.

3. Place not bravery and courage in appearing valiant, in ſuffering nothing from any perſon, in fighting upon all occaſions, but in ſerving faithfully and courageouſly your prince and country in all occurrences. With regard to duels ſee Part III. Chap. XI.

As for what remains towards the regulating of your life, be no ſwearer, and blaſphemer.

Hinder diſorders, as duels, blaſphemies, injuſtices, robberies, vexations, violence, ſacrileges, and all other miſchiefs which ſoldiers may commit: you are obliged to it when you can, eſpecially if you be in command. You ſhall anſwer to God for all the diſorders committed under you, if you have not uſed all your endeavours to prevent them. You are obliged to make reſtitution for all the damage which is done to others by your fault. Neither promote nor countenance any injuſtice, nor put in execution the commands of others, which you clearly ſee to be unjuſt.

Be aſſiſting to the afflicted, protect the poor, and all thoſe who ſuffer violence or injuſtice.

Be not inſolent in victory, nor cruel towards the conquered, but mild and favourable as much as prudence will permit, following that maxim of St. *Auguſtine**, who ſays, "that as force is uſed "towards the enemy who reſiſts, ſo mercy ought to be ſhewn to "him who is overcome, when he is no more in a condition to hurt."

Often examine your conſcience, to keep it always in a ſtate of inno-

* Ep. 205.

innocence; confeſs frequently, beg of God daily that he would give you grace to avoid the dangers of your ſtate and condition, reflecting often on them to that end.

*The lawyer.*

The lawyer muſt avoid ignorance in his profeſſion, undertaking unjuſt or ill-grounded cauſes, adviſing unreaſonable diſputes, encouraging vexatious ſuits, anſwering according to the inclination of the parties, making every cauſe appear probable; accuſing falſely, or detracting his neighbour to defend himſelf; revealing what is ſecret, when not belonging to the cauſe; uſing ſuch licence in invectives and injuries, as if it were lawful to violate charity for the preſervation of one's right; contriving ways for putting off the hearing, or otherwiſe prolonging the ſuit, either for his own advantage, or for tiring out his adverſary with unreaſonable charges; putting his client, eſpecially poor people, to extravagant expenſes; neglecting the ſuits of poor clients; fomenting diviſions, or falſifying deeds. He muſt alſo beware of having his mind ſo much employed with the temporal concerns of his neighbour, as to neglect the moſt important affair of his own ſalvation.

*Judges.*

Judges or arbitrators ſhould never permit their judgment to be corrupted by paſſion, favour, party, or intereſt, otherwiſe they do injury to right, and perhaps to eſtate, reputation, or life.

*The phyſician and ſurgeon.*

The doctor and ſurgeon undertake a cure: if then they neglect their patient; if they will not conſider his caſe; if they raſhly engage in what they do not underſtand; if they make delays in the cure, &c. they are unjuſt to their patient, they rob him of his money, and many times of his life. Theſe alſo ſin, if they flatter the dying patient with hopes of life, when they ſhould rather admoniſh him to ſet in order his conſcience: or if too eaſy in giving their patients certificates for being diſpenſed with as to faſting. I add the danger of ſin to which they are expoſed by being neceſſitated to treat objects which may excite impurity; for which reaſon they ſhould take great precaution againſt this vice.

*Tradeſmen.*

Tradeſmen ought to avoid covetouſneſs, or the exceſſive deſire of gain or riches, deceits, diſguiſing or falſifying merchandizes, breaking their word, unjuſt and unreaſonable gain, uſury, and other diſorders. The ſame in proportion is to be ſaid of artificers and other profeſſions, which have relation to, or are in combination with the former.

*Truſtees and guardians.* Many undertake to be truſtees and guardians: if theſe have little or no regard to what they have undertaken, ſo that the parties concerned are wronged through their want of care and inſpection, or for not taking accounts: if they are careful, but manage for their own advantage, and not for thoſe who are in their truſt: if they any way concur in or conſent to any thing in wrong to their truſt, however they may palliate it, as to ſatisfy or elude the law, yet they have ſo much injuſtice to anſwer to God, and ought to enquire, how far they are bound to reſtitution.

*Overſeers of the poor.* If thoſe who have the care of the poor, or are concerned in other collections, turn any part of it above what may be allowed, to their own uſe? If they make unneceſſary expenſes, and ſet it down to the ſtock? If they any other way wrong the public, they are ſo far guilty of injuſtice, and muſt compenſate the damage.

*Bayliffs or ſtewards.* If thoſe who are bayliffs or ſtewards, or have any other part in gathering in or paying out money, through their neglect make thoſe loſers who employ them: if they unreaſonably oppreſs debtors, and the poor, for their own gain; if they are induſtrious in turning to their own advantage, what in right, is the maſter's; if they make ill-contracts or hazardous for the maſter, but for their own profit; if they connive at or favour thoſe who injure the maſter, they are ſo far reſponſible and bound to reſtitution.

*Servants.* Servants are not to accept of a place for a livelihood, where they have not opportunity of ſerving God, and taking due care of their ſouls; where they have daily ill example of prophaneneſs and of other ſcandalous vices; where they muſt ſerve their maſter or others, in what is ſinful; or where there is danger of being drawn into ſin, either by thoſe whom they ſerve, or by other companions. But if they are in ſervice, they muſt be faithful in punctually doing what they have undertaken, and belongs to their place; in not waſting, miſemploying or giving away, what belongs to their maſters; nor in letting them be loſers through their neglect; nor in making any advantage to themſelves, of what belongs to them. Theſe being ſome of the obligations of ſervants, none can pretend to a good conſcience, if they do not make a conſcience of them;

and

and if they do not diligently enquire, what their duties are, and faithfully endeavour to perform them.

Thus in every profeſſion there are vices and dangers, which muſt be known before perſons enter upon them, that they may beware of them, becauſe without this precaution they follow the broad road of thoſe who by being faithleſs to the duties of their profeſſion riſk the loſs of their ſouls.

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## CHAP. VII.

### *Of the ſtate of marriage.*

WHEN you are entered into one of the former employments of a civil life, you muſt ſettle in the world, which ordinarily is performed by marriage, and ſometimes, though more rarely, in an unmarried life. In the choice of theſe two ſtates, perſons frequently fall into many faults, which draw after them an infinite number of miſeries, and eternal damnation. It is therefore infinitely intereſting to know 1ſt the holineſs, obligations, advantages and dangers of theſe two reſpective ſtates: 2dly, What diſpoſitions are required to ſatisfy the duties of theſe two ſtates.

### ARTICLE I.

#### *What we muſt know of a married life.*

THIS ſtate is holy, being inſtituted and ſanctified by God himſelf from the beginning of the world, and ſince raiſed to the dignity of a ſacrament by his Son *Jeſus Chriſt*, to ſanctify the perſons that would enter into it, and to confer on them graces neceſſary to acquit themſelves worthily of it. Thus this ſtate is holy every way, by its author who is God, by the dignity of the ſacrament which is annexed to it, by the ſanctifying grace which it augments in thoſe who duly receive it, by the graces and aſſiſtances it affords them in their neceſſities, and by the excellent ſignification of the union of *Jeſus Chriſt* with the church his ſpouſe, which made St. *Paul* give it the name of a great ſacrament *. *Holineſs of the marriage ſtate.*

Secondly, the holineſs of this ſtate brings with it great obligations, which are 1ſt to undertake and proceed in it with purity of intention, *Its obligations.*



* Epheſ. v.

tention, and to obſerve all thoſe conditions, which the church preſcribes. 2dly, To lead a holy and truly Chriſtian life, in the fear of God, and in the obſervance of his commandments, as it is ſaid of the father and mother of St. *John the Baptiſt**. 3dly, To obſerve an inviolable fidelity to one another, to uſe moderately lawful pleaſures, and to refrain from thoſe that are forbidden. 4thly, To educate their children in the fear of God, provide for their neceſſities, to be concerned for their temporal well-being, but much more for their eternal ſalvation.

*Its advantages.* Thirdly, The advantages of this ſtate in order to ſalvation are not in general ſo great as thoſe of the Eccleſiaſtical or Religious life: at the ſame time it requires not ſo great a degree of perfection; and if it have any advantage over thoſe two ſtates, it is, that not binding to ſo much religious ſtrictneſs, ſalvation may be more eaſily ſecured, provided no other obſtacles occur. All temporal advantages are here out of the queſtion, becauſe we conſider this ſtate only with reference to ſalvation. Moreover, the pleaſures and contentments that are found therein, are not to be compared with its troubles and adverſities, according to St *Paul*, who ſays, that afflictions are inevitable to married perſons †.

*Its dangers.* Fourthly, The dangers of this ſtate are numerous, and ſo much greater, as they are not diſcovered, nor often perceived by thoſe who are environed with them.

The firſt ſprings from the exceſſive and unreaſonable love too frequently found between married perſons in prejudice to their love of God, which is the cauſe of a vaſt number of ſins committed through a criminal compliance, fearing more to diſpleaſe each other than offend God, and thus drawing upon themſelves his diſpleaſure and indignation.

The ſecond danger ariſing from a cauſe quite contrary to the former, is an averſion they ſometimes have for one another, proceeding from difference of humours, jealouſies, or indiſcretions, which make marriage become even hell in this world, and the way to another that is eternal.

The third danger proceeds from an inordinate love of their children, which is alſo an inexhauſtible ſource of ſins to parents, when through that fooliſh love they apply all their care to improving the temporal

* Luke i. † 1 Cor. vii. 28.

temporal advantages of their children, as health, beauty, good behaviour, to promoting them in the world, to heaping up riches for them, which will hazard their ſouls, to procuring great employments for them, and in the mean time neglect their education, their correction, their amendment, their good life, and their eternal ſalvation.

The fourth danger is an immoderate love of the world, by ſetting their affections too much on its deceitful enjoyments, whereby they loſe the taſte and ſenſe of real goods, which are thoſe of grace and eternal ſalvation. This made St. *Paul* ſay, that *he that is with a wife, is ſolicitous for the things of the world, how he may pleaſe his wife: and he is divided* *. All theſe dangers are greater than can be expreſt, and married perſons have need of much grace to avoid them.

## ARTICLE II.

### *The neceſſary diſpoſitions for a married ſtate.*

WE may ſay with truth, that the greateſt part of the miſeries which happen in a married life, ſprings from the bad diſpoſitions of thoſe who engage in it, and particularly the following.

The firſt is, the wickedneſs of their youth, until the time of their marriage: for if, as the wiſe man ſays †, God will give a happy marriage to thoſe who have lived piouſly during their youth, it follows, that he frequently puniſheth the ſins of youth by an unfortunate marriage, as we daily ſee.

The ſecond fault is, the ſiniſter intention of thoſe who enter into the ſtate of marriage; who propoſe to themſelves no other end in that ſtate than pleaſure, and the contentments they expect to find therein, and which they conceive to be quite different from what in effect they are.

The third is, that which is committed in the choice of the perſon they have a mind to eſpouſe: a choice which is ordinarily made without conſulting God, without any knowledge of the diſpoſition, manners, or humour of the perſon with whom they are to be engaged for their whole life, and without any other conſideration than that of intereſt, or an indiſcreet and ill-grounded love. This is the complaint of St. *Jerome*, who ſays, "it often happens that there is no choice made in marriages, and "that



* 1 Cor. vii. 33. † Eccli. xxvi. 3.

" that the faults of the women are not known till after they are " eſpouſed."

The fourth cauſe ſprings from the bad diſpoſition they bring to the ſacrament of matrimony, which they often receive in the ſtate of ſin; and from the many irregularities committed in the celebration of the nuptials, as well by the married, as by thoſe who are invited: for how can God give his benediction to a marriage whereto the parties bring a heart full of lewd thoughts, and unchaſte deſires; where there appear great extravagance and expenſe in dreſs and feſtival entertainments, which offend Chriſtian modeſty, and frequently exceed their ſtate and ability, and where their diverſifements are mixed with all manner of exceſſes, and with all that is diſſolute and brutiſh? So that theſe nuptials are rather the triumph of impure love, and a feaſt of the Devil, than a marriage of Chriſtians, which ought to be conſecrated to modeſty, and ſanctified by the preſence of *Jeſus Chriſt*.

Theſe are the moſt ordinary cauſes of unhappy marriages, and of all the endleſs misfortunes which ariſe from thence. Wherefore to ſucceed well in ſo great and important an enterprize, you muſt carefully avoid all theſe ſo dreadful cauſes.

For this end be convinced of three truths, which are certain and undoubted maxims in this matter.

The firſt is, that the greateſt happineſs that can befal him who embraces a married life, is to ſucceed well in the choice of the perſon he would eſpouſe; as on the contrary, there is no greater misfortune than to ſucceed ill on this occaſion. The ſecond is, that this good ſucceſs can only come from God. And the third, that God does not ordinarily ſhew this favour, but to thoſe who have lived well, or have done penance, and have not fallen into the faults we have pointed out.

Theſe three truths are expreſſed by the Holy Ghoſt himſelf; he teaches the firſt, when he ſays by the mouth of the wiſe man, *He that hath found a good wife, hath found a good thing, and ſhall receive a pleaſure from the Lord* *. *There is nothing ſo much worth as a well inſtructed ſoul: a holy and ſhame-faced woman is grace upon grace*, that is, a bleſſing which ſurpaſſes all bleſſings †. *He that hath hold of her*, (a wicked woman) *is as he that taketh hold of a ſcorpion* ‡; and, *it will be more agreeable to abide with a lion and dragon, than to dwell with a wicked woman* §. The ſecond truth is expreſſed by

* Prov. xviii. 22. † Eccli. xxvi. 18, 19. ‡ Eccli. xxvi. 10. § Eccli. xxv. 23.

by these excellent words, spoken of what is there called *a diligent, a wise, and silent woman*, or a good wife: *Her discipline is the gift of God* *, to which there is nothing comparable. And in the *Proverbs*, *house and riches are given by parents; but a prudent wife is properly from the Lord* †. The third truth is a consequence of the second; for if God gives this great blessing, it follows also, that a man must merit it from him, *A good wife is a good portion, she shall be given in the portion of them that fear God to a man for his good deeds* ‡; God gives it to man in recompense of his good actions.

The Angel *Raphael* says to the father of young *Sarah*, that his daughter was reserved for young *Tobias*, because he feared God, and that the others had been unworthy of her by reason of their sins. *To him who feareth God is thy daughter due to be his wife: therefore another could not have her* §.

The second thing you have to do when you are fully convinced of these truths, and resolved to avoid the four faults we mentioned, which are the most ordinary causes of bad marriages, is to endeavour to acquire the necessary dispositions for marriage.

First then, Live well during your youth. Be chaste, and let not the love of pleasures take possession of your heart. Follow not the torrent of the bad example of those of your age, who seek nothing but pleasures. Be afraid, lest God punish you in the same way by which you have sinned, and that for the pleasures you shall have taken during your youth, which are soon past, he permit you to fall into a long train of insuperable difficulties and sorrows, which will not only make your life a hell upon earth, but endanger your being unhappy in the life to come.

Secondly, When you shall be about entering into the bonds of wedlock, lay aside all motives suggested by corrupt nature, and aim chiefly at God's honour and the saving of your soul. Seek not carnal pleasure in so pious a thing, but the virtuous end which a Christian ought to propose to himself. The angel *Raphael* has declared it in a word to young *Toby*; *Thou shalt take the virgin with the fear of the Lord, moved rather with the love of children than for lust* ¶. Call to mind the terrible example of the seven husbands of young *Sarah*, who were all stifled by the Devil on the day of their nuptials, and learn from thence the cause which the same Angel told to *Toby*: *Hear me*, says he to him, *and I will shew thee who*

* Eccli. xxvi. 16, 17, 18. † Prov. xix. 14. ‡ Eccli. xxvi. 3. § Tob. vii. 12. ¶ Tob. vi. 22.

*who they are, over whom the Devil can prevail. For they who in such manner receive matrimony, as to shut out God from themselves, and from their mind, and to give themselves to their lust, as the horse and mule, which have not understanding, over them the Devil hath power* *.

Imprint these words deeply in your mind, and know, that if the Devil does not destroy those immediately who prostitute the sanctity of marriage, he wants not other means to exercise over them the power God has given him, whereof he discovers but too many effects by all the miseries with which he infests the married state. They who would not fall into them, ought to avoid the cause, and have nothing but a chaste love in their heart, so that they may truly say to God those excellent words of young *Toby*, *Lord thou knowest, that not for fleshly lust, do I take my sister to wife, but only for the love of posterity, in which thy name may be blessed for ever and ever* †.

Thirdly, When you shall have formed a good intention, employ the proper means to deliberate well on so important an affair. The first, and most necessary, is to consult God by prayer, since a good marriage is the gift of God, and one of the greatest graces to those who embrace that state. Moreover, there being nothing more difficult than to know well the disposition and humour of the person, the divine assistance is most particularly necessary, that you may not be deceived therein, and this assistance ought to be implored; to prayer must be added all human and virtuous means to discover the disposition of the person, that you may not be rashly engaged, and know before you love.

Fourthly, When you are about to proceed in this important undertaking, remember to avoid the considerable faults which we have pointed at above, and which are usually committed at the celebration of marriage. And first, because it is a sacrament, which ought to be received in a state of grace, you must dispose yourself for it by confession and communion. Though this duty be usually complied with, yet frequently in so negligent a manner, that there is no confession in one's whole life that is performed with less spiritual profit; for it is often without preparation, and with a mind full of distractions, which thinks of nothing less than of God, and salvation, but is intent upon the excess, vanity, and pomps of the world: not to speak of those who confess in haste, without examen, without contrition, without any serious thoughts of amend-

* Tob. vi. 16, 17. † Tob. viii. 9.

amending their life, whence they commit one ſacrilege in confeſſion, and another in receiving the ſacrament of matrimony. Not to ſpeak alſo of thoſe, who being reſtored to the ſtate of grace, relapſe into ſin before matrimony, by deſire or immodeſt actions. There is no need to tell you ſuch profanations may entail a ſecret curſe upon ſuch marriages: ſuch perſons not only loſe all the graces which the ſacrament confers on married perſons, for ſatisfying the obligations, and bearing the difficulties of their ſtate, and for want of which graces they fall into a vaſt number of ſins; but they draw down upon their own heads the vengeance of God, who ſees himſelf offended by a ſacrilege at the time when they ſtand moſt in need of his grace. Avoid this ſo grievous and dreadful a fault at that juncture. Take time to think ſeriouſly on your ſalvation, by retiring privately for ſome days, or for ſome hours in many days; and in that retirement pray to God, requeſt his grace, implore his mercy, examine well your conſcience to confeſs all your ſins, propoſe to yourſelf to live piouſly for the future, and to acquit yourſelf of all the obligations of your marriage; and to perform the better all theſe things, make choice of a diſcreet confeſſor, of whom you may receive all the advice neceſſary for you. Read ſuch books as will inſtruct you in the holineſs of matrimony, and in its obligations. I adviſe you to read the hiſtory of *Tobias* in the ſacred ſcripture, you will there find rules, and the model of a truly holy marriage, with the bleſſings which crowned it.

In fine, in the celebration of the nuptials be mindful to avoid exceſs in clothes and feaſts, and all expenſes tending to vanity; and inſtead of thoſe expenſes, which are only intended to pleaſe men, give ſome conſiderable alms to the poor, which will draw down the bleſſing of God, as it is ſaid of *Toby: When all had ſaid amen*, (to the nuptial benediction); *they went to the feaſt: but the marriage feaſt they celebrated alſo with the fear of the Lord**.

Be careful that all things be managed with virtue and modeſty, ſo that God be in no wiſe offended. When you invite your relations and friends, remember to invite *Jeſus Chriſt* thither; that is, beſeech him that he will be preſent by his grace, and give his bleſſing to it, as he did to the wedding of *Cana*. Forget not alſo to invite thither his holy mother; it was ſhe who took care to ſupply what was wanting in thoſe nuptials, and who beſeeched her ſon to have compaſſion on the parties, and by her prayer obtained that

* Tob. ix. 12.

that great miracle of the change of water into wine: she will perform the same with respect to you, if you pray to her as you ought. "For, (as St. *Bernard** says) if she had compassion on "the temporal necessities of those who had invited her, there is no "doubt but she will do the same for your spiritual necessities: she "will obtain by her intercession what is ordinarily wanting in "nuptials; not a material wine, but the spiritual wine of the love "of God, of a good intention, of a conjugal chastity, of a solid "and persevering virtue, and all the necessary graces to discharge "the duties of your state."

## ARTICLE III.

*The conclusion of the foregoing chapter.*

WHEN you shall be once engaged in society, and in the state of matrimony, propose to yourself to live in such a manner, that your state be not a cause of your damnation, but a certain means of your salvation. It was with this view that you made choice of it, and God gave you that vocation only for this end. Labour therefore to second the intention of God, and to put in execution that which you yourself have undertaken. For this reason I have above pointed out the obligations of your state, and the dangers with which it abounds, that you may avoid the latter, and carefully discharge the former.

These obligations may be reduced to four, what married people owe to God, to their consort, to their children, and to themselves. They owe to God a holy life, and well regulated by the laws of the gospel; to their spouse, an inviolable fidelity; to their children, the care of educating them in the fear of God; and to themselves, the care of their salvation, by preferring it before all temporal blessings. Propose to yourself these four obligations, as the indispensable rules which you ought always to have before your eyes, to acquit yourself faithfully of them.

As for the dangers, use all your endeavours to avoid them: we have above reduced them to four, which are the most ordinary sources of all, both temporal and spiritual miseries, which happen to married persons.

You will prevent the first and third, by placing frequently before your eyes that expression of *Jesus Christ: He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me*†. If you love God as you ought, you will love him above all things, that is, more than any thing

* De Nupt. † Mat. x. 37.

thing that is moſt dear to you in the world. He who loves him not in this manner, will never be worthy to poſſeſs him in his eternal kingdom. Wife and children muſt be loved next to God, according to God, and for God.

The ſecond danger which ſprings from the averſion, which ſometimes ariſes between married perſons, is a miſchief which is more eaſily prevented than cured. To perform both the one and the other, there is no better means than frequently to repreſent to yourſelf that excellent admonition St. *Paul* gives to men: *Huſbands, love your wives, as Chriſt alſo loved the church, and delivered himſelf up for it: that he might ſanctify it* *. If you conſider well this example, you will find therein a perfect model of the true love married perſons ought to bear to their wives, which ought to be a generous love, which raiſes them above their imperfections, to ſupport them with patience, and to cure them by the convenient means which prudence and charity ſhall ſuggeſt, if they have a real deſire to ſave themſelves with them.

In fine, you will avoid the fourth danger, which comes from the love of the world, by this great advice which the ſame Apoſtle gives to married perſons, which they ought always to revolve in their mind: *This therefore I ſay, brethren: the time is ſhort: it remaineth, that they alſo who have wives, be as though they had none: and they that weep, as though they wept not: and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not: and they that buy, as though they poſſeſſed not: and they that uſe this world, as though they uſed it not: for the faſhion of this world paſſeth away* †. The meaning is, that this life being ſhort, we muſt make uſe of theſe goods with much moderation, not fixing our affection upon them as being only ſubordinate to our principal aim: and that the goods of this life having more of appearance than ſolidity, it is a great folly to love them to the prejudice of thoſe of the other life, which are real goods; and for theſe imaginary and periſhable riches, to put one's ſelf in danger of loſing bleſſings which ſhall never end, and by loſing them, to draw upon one's ſelf an eternity of miſeries.

## CHAP. VIII.

### *Of a ſingle life.*

I Speak not here of the ſingle life of prieſts and religious, but of the ſtate of continence, which perſons of both ſexes ſometimes obſerve

* Eph. v. 25, 26. † 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30, 31.

obſerve in the world; which may happen two ways, by neceſſity or by election. By neceſſity, when for ſome cauſe which depends not on us, as poverty, infirmity, or ſome other invincible impediment, a man cannot attain to a good marriage. By election, when by deliberate purpoſe one renounces the ſtate of matrimony, to live in perpetual continence.

*A ſingle life by neceſſity.*

They who chance to be obliged to continence by the former way, have need of much virtue, to ſave themſelves in a ſtate wherein they remain againſt their will.

1. The firſt thing to be done, is ſtrongly to reſiſt the vexation their condition obliges them to. They ought to conſider, that it is God who by his will has placed them in that ſtate; that he has done it for good reaſons, and chiefly for their ſalvation: from whence it follows, that he will not fail to beſtow on them, all the graces neceſſary to obſerve continence, and live holily in their condition. Moreover they have this advantage above the other ſtates, of being fully aſſured that their vocation comes from God, and by conſequence nothing will be wanting on his part, to effect their ſalvation in the ſtate wherein he has placed them.

2. Being convinced of theſe truths, they muſt perform a ſecond thing, they muſt, as it is commonly ſaid, make a virtue of neceſſity, by doing through a voluntary acceptance of their ſtate, what they would have done by chooſing it freely, if they had had their wiſh; that is to ſay, they muſt embrace their condition as coming from the hand of God, and conſecrate to him their chaſtity, as a preſent he requires of them, which may be as pleaſing to him as if they had offered it of their own accord.

3. After they have thus voluntarily accepted the condition God has placed them in, they muſt propoſe to live holily therein, and uſe the neceſſary means for that end, which are the ſame we are about to give to them who make choice of it by their own free will.

*A ſingle life by choice.*

I mean thoſe, who for the ſake of practiſing more perfect virtue, by a divine call prefer a ſtate of perpetual virginity; and I ſay they have need of many admonitions, which I beſeech you, *Theotime*, to weigh well if you be of that number.

The firſt is, to examine well the motive which induces you to embrace this choice, and the life you mean to lead in that condition:

tion: for, if you only make choice of the ſtate of celibacy to avoid the troubles and perplexity of marriage, and if you would live in that condition with all the liberty a man gives himſelf in marriage, ſo as to indulge therein all your pleaſures, to converſe with women, and to be as fond of diſſipation and worldly company as if you were married, it is certain your choice is worth nothing; it is a ſnare the Devil lays for you, to make you fall into an infinite number of ſins againſt chaſtity, from which it is impoſſible to preſerve yourſelf amidſt ſo voluptuous a life, and ſo many dangerous occaſions. Wherefore in this caſe I make no difficulty of aſſerting that you would do better to marry, and are obliged to it. If you wiſh to make choice of the ſtate of continence according to God, you muſt embrace it out of a motive of piety, that is, to pleaſe God more in that ſtate, and the better to ſecure your ſalvation. This is the ſole intention you ought to have in chooſing ſo perfect a ſtate, and they who have not ſuch an intention, have embraced it on an ill account, and with danger of making a wretched end. Examine ſeriouſly what intention you have, beware of being deceived in it; be ſolicitous to confer with ſome wiſe and pious perſon about it.

Secondly, when you ſhall be aſſured of your intention, you muſt come to the means of living up to that ſtate, whereof the firſt is to know perfectly its excellency, its advantages, and its dangers.

As for its excellency, the fathers, from the very diſciples of the Apoſtles, are all profuſe in extolling the excellency of holy virginity, and unanimouſly declare it to be more perfect and more excellent than marriage; although marriage is a holy ſtate inſtituted by God, and in the order of providence and nature the general or moſt ordinary ſtate of thoſe who live in the world.

It ſurpaſſes that of marriage, "As much as better things ſur-" paſs leſs good; as things above, thoſe which are below; as " much as celeſtial ſurpaſs terreſtrial, the more happy and holy " excel thoſe which have leſs ſanctity and holineſs *.

The advantages of this ſtate are great; St. *Paul* † has compriſed them in few words, when he ſays that it purifies the ſoul, fits it for a more perfect love of God, and a cloſer application to heavenly things, and diſengages the mind and heart from worldly thoughts and affections.

The obligations of the ſame ſtate are no leſs than its advantages. It requires two great virtues, the practice of which are very difficult,

* S. Fulgentius de Virginitate. † 1 Cor. vii.

difficult, chaſtity and humility. Chaſtity does not only oblige them to abſtain from the pleaſures which matrimony may render lawful, but alſo to preſerve an abſolute, entire, and perfect purity of mind and body, and to fly from whatſoever may in the leaſt wound modeſty in thought, word, or deed. And humility obliges them to preſerve themſelves carefully from falling into vanity, or having any good opinion or preſumption of themſelves for the ſingular gift of voluntary chaſtity. Theſe two virtues ought to be inſeparable, and they have ſo great a connection one with another, that St. *Fulgentius* calls them by the ſame name, ſaying; "humility is the virginity of the mind; and it is ſo neceſſary for "that of the body, that corporal chaſtity is of no advantage "without that of the mind; it being certain, married perſons "ſhall be ſaved without obſerving corporal virginity, and virgins "ſhall not without the ſpiritual, which is humility."

From theſe two great obligations it is eaſy to judge of the dangers of that ſtate, which are as great as theſe two virtues are difficult to practiſe, and to unite together; the enemy of our ſalvation employs all his endeavours againſt virgins, to make them loſe both the one and the other. St. *Fulgentius* ſays, "that the "Devil ſtrongly aſſaults theſe two virtues in virgins of both ſexes, "and when he cannot deprive them of the firſt by temptations, "he endeavours to raviſh the ſecond by illuſions. Sometimes he "attacks not ſo ſtrongly the chaſtity of the body, that he may "more eaſily prevail over that of the mind, which is a more ſingular privilege; he lets himſelf be overcome in the temptations "of the fleſh, that by this victory he may inſtill pride into the "mind of him who has overcome; not being able to conquer virgins by open vice, which he inſpires into them, he gains them "by ſins which he draws from their own virtue."

It is neceſſary however, *Theotime*, to inform you, that theſe dangers ought not to prevent your embracing the ſtate of continence, if you be inclined thereunto from an upright intention; for although the trials of virginity are great, the grace of God is ſtill ſtronger to render you victorious over them; God by his goodneſs fails not to aſſiſt with his powerful grace, thoſe who embrace ſo difficult a ſtate, to ſerve him more perfectly, and who ſeek all the neceſſary means of diſcharging its reſpective duties, whereof the firſt is to know well the excellency, the obligations, and the dangers of that ſtate.

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The other means are prayer, and meditation upon holy things; induſtry, and all thoſe others we have ſhewn above in Part III. Chap. VIII. to preſerve chaſtity; and alſo thoſe we have given to preſerve humility, in Part IV. Chap. XXIII.

## CHAP. IX.

*Moſt important advice for young perſons, who begin to enter into the world.*

THE ſacred ſcripture in the ſecond book of *Maccabees*, recounts, that after the taking of the city of *Jeruſalem* by *Nabuchadonoſor*, when the *Jews* were upon the point of being ſent to *Babylon*, the Prophet *Jeremy* took care to furniſh them with a great number of admonitions againſt the dangers they ſhould be expoſed to, of departing from God, and being perverted in that Pagan country. *He gave them the law*, that is, the ſcripture, *that they ſhould not forget the commandments of the Lord, and that they ſhould not err in their minds, ſeeing the idols of gold, and ſilver, and the ornaments of them. And with other ſuch like ſpeeches he exhorted them that they would not remove the law from their heart* *.

*Read theſe admonitions attentively.*

The like advice is to be with no leſs earneſtneſs preſſed to youth, who are juſt ſtepping forth into the world, and upon the eve of ſettling in ſome ſtate of life, in order that they may be fortified againſt the dangers with which it abounds at every ſtep.

It is therefore as much as your ſoul is worth, to remember and put in practice the following advices.

### ADVICE I.

*That the time of iſſuing out of youth, and entering into the world, is the moſt dangerous of all our life, and many are ſhipwrecked therein.*

THIS is the firſt admonition I give you, and which I wiſh may be deeply engraven in the minds of all young people, to make them dread ſo ſlippery a ſtep, and ſo dangerous a change for their age, where many are daily bringing miſchief on their own heads.

It is there the Devil waits for them, and where he hopes his attempts will not be vain and unſucceſsful: he takes every offered occaſion of withdrawing them from virtue, (if before they have been bred up therein) or engaging them more deeply in vice; ſuch



* 2 Machab. ii. 2, 3.

are the liberty they begin to enjoy, the idleneſs into which they eaſily fall at that time, the more opportunities they have of committing ill, together with eaſier means of indulging merriment and their pleaſures, the new companies which they frequent, where they ſoon learn the ſpirit of the world, vanity, pride, love of pleaſures, the imitation of the wicked, and the entire corruption of their morals; the ſentiments of virtue which they had been bleſſed with in their youth, are eaſily forgotten; thoſe ſeem now fit only for children, they think they muſt have a more refined and elevated ſpirit, they contemn what they eſteemed before; the moſt pious reſolutions appear to them the effects of ſimplicity; thus their former happy averſion to all that was ſin, is changed into an unhappy approbation and love of open vice, to the diſappointment of the beſt care, that had been taken in their education.

This truth is very manifeſt, experience makes it daily appear, to the great regret of thoſe who pretend to the leaſt zeal for the ſalvation of youth.

St. *Auguſtine* deplores his unhappineſs herein, when he ſays, "that domeſtic affairs having called him from his ſtudies at the "age of ſixteen, to return to his father's houſe, vice and ſenſual "pleaſures began to grow above his head, as briars in a neglected "ground, and to be multiplied ſo much more as there was no diſ-"creet hand to weed them out *."

It would be well if he had not had ſo many companions in his misfortune; but the multitude of them is very great, particularly amongſt young people, who have any advantage above others in their condition or fortune.

There are few found to imitate the holy man *Toby*, whom all young perſons ought to take for their example in that age, of whom the ſcripture obſerves, that *When he was younger than any of the tribe of Nephthali, yet did he no childiſh thing in his work. Moreover when all went to the golden calves, which Jeroboam King of Iſrael had made, he alone fled the company of all, and went to Jeruſalem to the temple of the Lord, and there adored the Lord God of Iſrael* †. What an excellent pattern is this for young people, who enter into the world, and which they ought frequently to place before their eyes, as being propoſed by the Holy Ghoſt for that intent.

There are ſome, though few who imitate this example; God has always ſome faithful followers, who bend not their knees before *Baal*, nor permit themſelves to be corrupted by the contagion of the

* Lib. 2. Conf. c. 3. † Tob. i. 4, 5, 6.

the world. To the end, *Theotime*, you may be of that number, I give you this ſo neceſſary, but little known admonition, and continue the following advices.

## ADVICE II.

*That the chief care of young men, who enter the world, ought to be the preſervation of the ſentiments and practices of piety, which they have obſerved in their youth.*

THE reaſon of this advice is, becauſe the firſt ſource of the diſorder of young perſons at that time, ſprings from the change of their ſentiments concerning piety, and the abandoning of their former religious exerciſes, ſuch as daily prayer, reading pious books, frequenting the ſacraments, converſation with virtuous perſons, and eſpecially adviſing with a diſcreet director.

Virtue is always the ſame, and what age or circumſtances ſoever you be in, you always belong to God, and are bound to ſerve him faithfully.

Again if you be obliged to virtue, you are alſo obliged to all the means neceſſary for acquiring and preſerving virtue; ſuch are the practices we have ſpoken of above. If you be truly in earneſt in the buſineſs of your ſalvation, you will never fail in theſe eſſential duties. The moment you leave them off, your ruin is at hand. Be diligent in praying, in reading good books, in frequenting the ſacraments, in converſing with virtuous perſons, but particularly in diſcloſing your interior to ſuch a ſpiritual adviſer, as can beſt help you to amend. It is too common a misfortune among all young people not to conſult knowing and zealous perſons about the affairs of their ſouls, but to fly from thoſe who might confirm them in good or reclaim them if they be gone aſtray. They ſo long purpoſely decline theſe ſpiritual helps as at laſt to exclude themſelves from all means of being reformed.

Act not in this manner, *Theotime;* remember that St. *Auguſtine* attributes to this cauſe the diſorder he fell into at the end of his ſtudies, becauſe he had no one to take care to root out the vices which then grew up in his ſoul. Forget not alſo what the ſcripture recounts of King *Joas; Joas did that which was right before the Lord all the days that Joiada the prieſt taught him* *. He no ſooner ceaſed to be governed, by the advice of that holy man, than he became wicked and made an unhappy end.



* 4 Kings xii. 2.

## ADVICE III.

*That young men must fly wicked company, especially where there is likely to be any freedom of converſation or friendſhip.*

*See Part III. Chap. VI.*

THE firſt ſnare the Devil ſets at that time for the ſalvation of young people, is wicked company: we have ſpoken above how hurtful it is, principally at that time, when it is dangerous beyond imagination. The world abounding with it, it is very difficult to eſcape being entangled. Beſides, they have not as yet ſufficient judgment to diſcern, nor ſufficient diſcretion to avoid, nor courage to reſiſt it. The wicked beſiege them continually, to draw them to their diſorders, as it is ſaid in the *Proverbs* *. They tell them, they muſt do as others do; an ill-timed civility leads them away, and a vicious ſhame hinders them from withſtanding their wicked ſolicitations: thus they ſoon find themſelves overcome and perverted.

Dread this precipice, if you tender your ſalvation; you can never ſufficiently apprehend the danger. Beſeech God daily that he would deliver you; be not pleaſed in the ways of the wicked: turn away, fly and forſake them.

Among wicked company, above all avoid thoſe with whom your ſituation or circumſtances ſhould otherwiſe engage you in ſome degree of familiarity. You will meet with them more frequently, you will have more trouble to reſiſt them; we more eaſily permit ourſelves to be won by thoſe that render themſelves agreeable. King *Joas*, who had lived ſo holily during his youth, under the direction of the high prieſt *Joiada*, was ſo far perverted by his courtiers, as by their ſolicitations to fall into idolatry. Stand upon your guard, I ſay, that at leaſt you may not be corrupted by them, although you cannot abſolutely avoid meeting ſuch company: fly their converſation as much as you can; when you cannot avoid them, ſtay not long with them, find ſome means of withdrawing from them. O *Theotime*, how happy would you be, if after this ſo dangerous a time of youth, you could ſay with truth as King *David*, *The cords of the wicked have encompaſſed me, but I have not forgot thy law* †. *Thou haſt protected me from the aſſembly of the malignant; from the multitude of the workers of iniquity* ‡.

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* Chap. i. † Pſalm cxviii. 61. Pſalm lxiii. 3.

## ADVICE IV.

*That they muſt apply themſelves quickly to ſome buſineſs, which may employ their time, and make them avoid idleneſs, which is then more dangerous than at any other time.*

IDleneſs is the greateſt cauſe of the diſſoluteneſs of young men when they come from ſchool. It is the mother of vice, and very hard to be avoided at that time. Nature of herſelf is inclined to it, eſpecially in youth after labour which ſuppoſes ſome reſtraint, ſuch as that of ſtudy, or other youthful employments. Hence when they begin to enjoy liberty, and become their own maſters, they then the more eaſily abandon themſelves to idleneſs, as they have a long time ſighed after it, and know not the neceſſity of being employed at that time, nor the great evils idleneſs will expoſe them to. In this ſloth vice and ill habits grow up in a ſhort time, as it happened to St. *Auguſtine*. They think of nothing but play and paſtimes, of indulging their pleaſures, and of herding with thoſe companions from whom they can neither fear reproach, nor expect advice.

To avoid this miſchief, *Theotime*, I adviſe you to fly at that time this pernicious idleneſs. Apply yourſelf betimes to a regular employment, and chiefly to that which is neceſſary for you, to make you expert in the profeſſion you embrace; both God and your own conſcience oblige you to it. Add thereto the ſtudies beſt calculated to improve your mind, as of hiſtory, as well ſacred as profane, chronology, geography, languages, good authors, and other like ſtudies, which are commendable, profitable, and pleaſing. If you are deſirous of being well employed, you will find more than enough to fill up your time; and beſides the profit of your labour, you will enjoy therein great contentment and ſatisfaction of mind, far beyond all this world can afford. Read Part III. Chap. VII.

## ADVICE V.

*That young people muſt avoid three ordinary cauſes of their ruin at that time,* Play, Wine, *and* Impurity.

THESE are the three great rocks on which at this time young people ſplit, and to which idleneſs and company bring them, and cauſe their ſhipwreck. Some are loſt by an inordinate love for gaming, which occaſions an exceſſive loſs of time, together with that of their fortune, vexation and deſpair, and

makes them frequently fall into ſome notorious extravagance. Others by the exceſs of wine and good cheer, which they then ſeek as their chief happineſs, which, beſides the ruin of their health and fortune, is frequently the cauſe of ſad miſchiefs. Others, and the greateſt part, by the deteſtable ſin of impurity, which ſo univerſally poſſeſſes young people, principally at that time; and many by all theſe together.

I beſeech you, dear *Theotime*, to obſerve attentively theſe three precipices you are to avoid at that time. See what we have ſaid above of each of theſe in Part III. Chap. VIII. and in Part IV. Chap. XX. Uſe all poſſible endeavours to fly them, and be confident, that upon this flight depends your preſent happineſs, and eternal ſalvation.

## ADVICE VI.

*That they muſt avoid at that time irreſolution concerning the ſtate they ought to chooſe, and after the choice, not change eaſily, nor without great reaſon.*

THIS is alſo an advice of much importance for young perſons, when they are at the time of chooſing a condition of life, not to be too long unreſolved. This irreſolution hinders them from applying themſelves to any ſettled employment; it makes them loſe much time, which might be uſefully employed; it expoſes them to many temptations, oftentimes to ſadneſs and diſcontent; and when it continues long, it renders them unfit for any thing that is good all the reſt of their life, as we daily ſee.

A young man muſt then reſolve in good time on the ſtate he will embrace, obſerving nevertheleſs in this reſolution the conditions we have ſpoken of above.

But when his determination is once prudently fixed, he ought to avoid inconſtancy and change, which is yet a greater miſchief than the firſt irreſolution.

The evils which this inconſtancy cauſes in a young man, cannot be ſufficiently expreſſed: the Devil makes uſe of it to caſt him into melancholy, vexation, and diſquiet; from thence into a long idleneſs, to make him loſe unprofitably the beſt part of his life, and hinder him from making himſelf capable of any good employment. He there takes occaſion of moving him to impatience, to a diſtaſte of virtue, to a relaxation in his religious exerciſes, of drawing him into great temptations, and often plunging him into vice.

This

This made the wise man say, that *As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is a man that leaveth his place**. For as that bird finds neither repose nor security, flying up and down without meeting with any resting place, exposing her life to many dangers, so an unconstant man finds no quiet, but exposes his soul to many difficulties.

Avoid then, *Theotime*, this inconstancy; and if you be disturbed with it, be assured that you are exposed to a very dangerous evil, and a great temptation. This mischief is frequently the punishment of the sins of youth; wherefore humble yourself before God, and beg of him that he would deliver you from it by his grace, and bestow on you a constancy of mind to continue in his will, and faithfully perform it.

Make a Christian choice of your state of life; then change not without great consideration. But if there occurs some solid reason for changing your resolution, trust not to your own judgment, but to that of discreet persons; and in waiting their advice, remain still in your former resolution, and continue the exercises you performed to prepare yourself for it, until by discreet counsel you find an absolute reason for changing.

## ADVICE VII.

*That young men ought to foresee the dangers and obligations of their calling, and firmly purpose to avoid those dangers, and faithfully to satisfy their respective obligations.*

I Have spoken above of the dangers and obligations of divers states, that I might give you this precaution, and make you take this resolution.

Now I speak not of a slight fore-knowledge, nor of a passing resolution, but of a serious and well meditated foresight, and of a long and repeated resolution.

But to render it efficacious, I desire two things of you. The first is, to beseech God frequently that he would assist you with his holy grace, to avoid the dangers you meet with in the world, and to discharge the duty of a true Christian in your profession, and also the particular obligations incumbent upon you. The second is, to set apart one day every month for reading and considering what we have said of the dangers and obligations of the state you have chosen, in order to reflect seriously, and renew your resolution of



* Prov. xxvii. 8.

avoiding the dangers of your profeſſion, and complying with its obligations.

## ADVICE VIII.

*That they muſt accuſtom themſelves betimes not to be aſhamed of virtue.*

WHEN you ſhall be fortified againſt all the former obſtacles, there will remain yet one for you to encounter with, which is that vicious ſhame young perſons frequently have for virtue. The world is ſo corrupt, that virtue is become the object of ſhame and confuſion. Wherefore I adviſe you to accuſtom yourſelf betimes to overcome that fooliſh ſhame, one of the greateſt obſtacles to ſalvation. It is moſt criminal in the ſight of God, to bluſh at his ſervice; and he will not acknowledge thoſe for his ſervants, who have bluſhed to fulfil his commandments.

You muſt reſolutely maſter this ſhame, there is only a little trouble in the beginning; you muſt declare yourſelf early in favour of goodneſs againſt vice, and readily perform the actions of a virtuous man, without either doing it to pleaſe men, or neglecting it for fear of them. We muſt perform our duty without concerning ourſelves with what the world may ſay or think of it, but only regarding God and the obligations of a Chriſtian. See what we have ſaid of this ſubject in Part III. Chap. V.

## ADVICE IX.

*That they muſt be careful to embrace a ſolid and real virtue, and not an apparent and deceitful piety.*

THOUGH you be reſolved to live virtuouſly, you may be deceived in the choice of piety, leaving ſolid and real virtue, to embrace a falſe and imaginary devotion, which oftentimes is more dangerous than bare-faced vice, though nevertheleſs very common amongſt men of all ſtates, even amongſt Eccleſiaſtics and Religious. Now there are many ſorts of counterfeit piety.

*Four ſorts of falſe piety.*

*Firſt.* The firſt ſort is of thoſe who reſt contented with the gaudy pageantry of piety and virtue, performing carefully certain outward actions of devotion, as ſome ſet forms of prayer, certain abſtinences and faſts not commanded, or other exterior mortification, ſome practices of confraternities,

nities, and other like devotions, but in the mean time neglect interior and ſolid virtue, that is, the flight of ſin, the correction of their vices, mortification of their paſſions; continuing always in the ſame vices, proud, choleric, impatient, revengeful, much addicted to earthly goods, to the pleaſures of this life, to exceſs, to vanity, and often to unchaſte delights, and to many other vices.

The ſecond is of thoſe who are exact in performing works of counſel, but omit thoſe of command. Such is the piety of the maſter of a family, who accuſtoms himſelf to frequent the ſacraments, to be aſſiduous in prayer, to viſit hoſpitals, and in the mean time neglects to take care of his family, to inſtruct his children, to withdraw them from vice when they are engaged therein, to be concerned for the ſalvation of all under his roof, to watch over their conduct, to repreſs any growing diſorders, to pay his debts, to reſtore ill-gotten goods. *Second.*

The third is of thoſe, who among the things commanded obſerve ſome, and neglect others; practiſe thoſe which they find eaſieſt, or conformable to their inclination, but omit thoſe which ſeem to them more difficult. For example, there are ſome who would not wrong their neighbour in his goods, yet make no ſcruple of taking away his honour by detraction. Others have an averſion for drunkenneſs, but not for impurity. Others hate lewd actions, but not unchaſte deſires and diſcourſe. Others love to aſſiſt their neighbour, but never will pardon an offence. All this piety is falſe, becauſe he who is defective in one commandment is void of charity. *Third.*

The fourth is of thoſe who obſerve the things of obligation which are common to all Chriſtians, and perform not thoſe belonging to their particular ſtate. Thus for a ſuperior, a paſtor, a magiſtrate, to live as a Chriſtian in general, but in the mean time to neglect the care of his charge, and the particular obligations of his calling, is to deceive himſelf with the ſhadow of virtue. The duties of a private man are different from thoſe of a public perſon; and in each condition there are particular obligations, wherein one cannot fail without being wanting to virtue. *Fourth.*

I ſhould be too long, if I ſhould treat of all ſorts of falſe piety; that you may briefly comprehend them, *Theotime*, I adviſe you not to embrace a proud and arrogant virtue, which deſpiſes others, which

which can ſuffer nothing, which takes notice of the faults, of others, but acknowledges not its own.

Nor a ſullen and melancholy virtue, which makes itſelf troubleſome and difficult to all, ſevere to others, eaſy to itſelf; ready to blame, but never to excuſe, even when there is great reaſon.

Nor a ſingular virtue, which ſequeſters itſelf from the ways of others, to follow extraordinary practices, new devotions, affected ſingularities, which are often the effects of a ſecret and rooted preſumption.

Nor a mean, ſilly, and childiſh virtue, which trembles where it ought not to fear, ſtands in dread where it ought not to doubt, which makes a ſcruple of things which are not ſins, but none of thoſe which are.

Nor on the contrary, a raſh, and too bold a virtue, which under pretext of not committing great crimes, indulges many ſinful liberties, which is a great error, becauſe he who contemns ſmall faults, ſhall fall into great ones.

Nor an imprudent and indiſcreet virtue, which paſſes over many faults which offend their neighbour more than it edifies by the good it does.

Nor a human and political virtue, which does good for worldly conſiderations, to pleaſe men, to be eſteemed, to obtain ſome end; briefly, which regards itſelf in all things it performs.

Nor an intereſted virtue, which addicts itſelf to good, by reaſon of the benefit and temporal advantage it receives.

Nor a remiſs virtue, or of ſhort continuance, which is dejected by the leaſt obſtacle, and ſhaken by preſent difficulties.

Carefully avoid all theſe kinds of virtues, *Theotime*, or rather all theſe faults which deſtroy true virtue; labour to ſhun them, and acquire the contrary qualities. Let your virtue be humble in itſelf, ſweet and charitable towards others, not ſingular; which loves the order of the church, and conduct of its paſtors; rational, that is, neither too fearful nor too bold; diſcreet in its actions, diſintereſted in its pretenſions, which ſeeks only to pleaſe God, and to perform good actions only for his ſake; generous in the midſt of obſtacles, and perſevering when ſurrounded with difficulties.

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## ADVICE X.

*That young perſons ought to confirm themſelves more and more in ſolid ſentiments of faith and religion.*

THIS is alſo a very neceſſary admonition, becauſe faith is the ſolid ground-work of piety, and without her there is no ſalvation *. Now you will find in the world many machines leveled againſt this fundamental rock, which you muſt guard againſt. Theſe are impiety, hereſy, and licentiouſneſs. Impiety of the wicked, hereſy of reformers in matters of religion, and the licentiouſneſs of ſome wicked Catholics.

Impiety is a monſter which attacks God himſelf, which lifts up its head againſt heaven † and its hand againſt the omnipotent, revolting againſt its creator, to ſerve unworthily the creature, and endeavouring to deface in its heart the moſt holy and inviolable ſentiments which faith, reaſon, and nature herſelf had imprinted there, to abandon itſelf to its paſſions with more liberty, and leſs remorſe of conſcience.

Hereſy, to follow our own judgment in matters of faith, ſhakes off the yoke of the Catholic church, which is *the pillar and ground of the truth* ‡. *And the gates of hell ſhall not prevail againſt it* §. According to the promiſe of the Son of God, who commands us to hearken to her, under pain of being eſteemed unbelievers ¶. So that he who does not acknowledge this holy mother, ſhall not have God for his father according to St. *Cyprian*, and St. *Auguſtine*.

The licentiouſneſs of wicked Catholics, making them ſeek means to flatter themſelves in their vices, emboldens them to take the liberty to examine divine truths, and to ſubject them to human reaſon; thence to fall into doubt, and from doubt into impious opinions, ſecret and hidden errors, which lead them to perdition.

Theſe are the three monſters, *Theotime*, the aſſault of which at your entering into the world you ought to ſtand in dread of: fly them, and have a horror and abomination for them, as the offspring of hell, and the plague of man-kind: avoid all thoſe in whom you ſhall find them. *In the laſt days*, ſays the great Apoſtle, *men ſhall be lovers of themſelves, covetous, haughty, proud, blaſphemers, wicked, and lovers of pleaſures more than of God. Now theſe avoid* ‖.

Hold

* Heb. xi. 6. † Job. xv. ‡ 1 Tim. iii. 15. § Mat. xvi. 18. ¶ Chap. xviii. 17. ‖ 2 Tim. iii. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

Hold it for an infallible maxim, that there is nothing more certain than the Chriſtian catholic faith. This faith ſo ſublime in her myſteries, ſo pure and holy in her maxims, ſupported by ſo great authorities, foretold by the prophets, confirmed by ſo many miracles, cemented by the blood of martyrs, defended by ſo many learned and ſaintly perſons, embraced by ſuch a multitude of people, continued during ſo many ages, which has never been ſhaken, either by the perſecution of Pagans, or by the falſe doctrine of heretics, or by the wicked lives of Catholics.

After all theſe things, ſays St. *Auſtin* *, "ſhall we doubt to "encloſe ourſelves in the boſom of this holy church, which ac- "cording to the confeſſion of the whole world, ſince the Apoſtles "to this preſent time, by a perpetual ſucceſſion of biſhops and "paſtors, has always ſtood on foot, in the midſt of a vaſt number "of heretics, who have in vain aſſaulted her, and who have "always been condemned, either by the judgment of the people "themſelves, or by the authority of councils, or by the force "of miracles? Not to acknowledge the primacy of this church, "is an effect of the higheſt impiety, or of a raſh preſumption."

Ponder well theſe truths, which are powerful enough to ſubdue the moſt rebellious ſpirits. Give thanks to God, that he has placed you in the boſom of his holy church, continue firm and conſtant therein, adhere always to the pious doctrine of this infallible guide, be ſubject to her paſtors, and to her viſible head the ſupreme biſhop. This is the body of the tree, from which we muſt never ſeparate to ſtick to the boughs. But to preſerve your faith, remember to lead a good life; becauſe the corruption of faith is an effect of ſin. *This charge I commend to thee*, ſays St. *Paul* to *Timothy*, *that thou war a good warfare, having faith and a good conſcience, which ſome rejecting have made ſhipwreck concerning the faith* †.

## ADVICE XI.

*That they muſt be ſtrongly ſettled in the Chriſtian maxims, oppoſite to thoſe of the world.*

IT is not ſufficient to be eſtabliſhed in the ſolid ſentiments of faith, you muſt alſo be ſettled in the maxims of morality, and of a Chriſtian life. The greateſt danger you will find in the world, is that of corrupting your mind by its falſe maxims, quite contrary to thoſe of

* L. de util. cred. † 1 Tim. i. 18. 19.

of salvation, by which the judgment being blinded, it is impossible that our life should not become disorderly. *When you are come into Babylon*, (said the Prophet *Jeremy*, writing to the *Jews* in captivity) *you shall see Gods of gold and of silver, and of stone, and of wood, borne upon shoulders, causing fear to the Gentiles. Beware therefore that you imitate not the doings of others. But when you see the multitude behind, and before, adoring them, say you in your hearts; thou oughtest to be adored, O Lord**. I say the same to you, *Theotime*, you will see men in the world adoring idols, that is, pleasures, vanities, riches, the flesh, and their passions; you will there see vice honoured, and virtue contemned; you will there hear maxims suitable to the corruption which the Devil has introduced. Be careful that you permit not yourself to be depraved by the example of the multitude. To prevent so great an evil, meditate frequently upon the true maxims of Christianity, those eternal truths which the world will not know, yet which will never alter. Imprint them deeply in your mind, to have recourse to them there, against the example and false maxims of the world, that they may serve you as secure rules for the conduct of your life: I shall give you here the most important, which I beseech you to read often.

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## CHAP. X.

### *Christian Maxims.*

### MAXIM I.

*That we are not created for this present life, but for heaven.*

THIS is the fundamental truth of Christianity: that there is a God, and that he has prepared an eternal reward for them who serve him; that this life is but a passage and way by which we must walk towards life everlasting. *Here we have no lasting city*, says the Apostle: *but we seek one to come*†.

### MAXIM II.

*That the most important affair which we have in this life, is our salvation.*

*ONE thing is necessary*, says truth itself‡. *What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul*§.

MAXIM

* Bar. vi. 2, 3, 4, 5. † Heb. xiii. 14. ‡ Luke x. 42. § Mat. xvi. 26.

## MAXIM III.

*That salvation is not obtained without some pains.*

THIS is what men cannot be convinced of, and yet it is most certain. The Son of God cries out aloud to all Christians, *The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence*. If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me†. How narrow is the gate, and strait is the way, that leadeth to life: and few there are that find it‡! Strive to enter by the narrow gate: for many, I say to you, shall seek to enter, and shall not be able§.*

## MAXIM IV.

*That our chief care in this life must be to please God, and live in his grace.*

TO please God his creator, his Lord, and his sovereign good, is the sole and real happiness of man in this life: a happiness, without which the greatest blessings are extreme miseries, and which the great Apostle wishes particularly to his dear disciples, and to all Christians. *We cease not*, says he, *to pray for you, and to beg that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom, and spiritual understanding: that you may walk worthy of God, in all things pleasing: being fruitful in every good work, and encreasing in the knowledge of God¶.* Were Christians convinced of this truth, they would fly sin like death itself, and seek all means of pleasing God, and living in his holy grace.

## MAXIM V.

*That we cannot be in the grace of God without having a constant resolution of never offending him grievously on any account whatsoever.*

IN this resolution consists the practice of the great commandment of loving God above all things, without which it is impossible to please him, and be in his grace; for he who loves him not, remains in death. Now we cannot love God without this resolution of never offending him. *If any one love me*, says the Son of God, *he will keep my word; he that loveth me not, keepeth not my words‖.*

## MAXIM VI.

*That sin is the greatest evil that can befal man.*

SIN offers an infinite injury to God, which all men and Angels cannot possibly repair: it deprives man of the grace of God, and

* Matt. xi. 12. † Matt. xvi. 24. ‡ Matt. vii. 14. § Luke xiii. 24.
¶ Col. i. 9, 10. ‖ John. xiv. 23, 24.

and makes him incur his hatred and indignation; it causes him to lose heaven for ever, and reduces him to the state of eternal damnation: it renders him unworthy of all the graces necessary to raise him from that deplorable condition, wherein God may justly leave him as he does many. Is there any mischief in the world to be compared to this? Is it possible men should think so little of it, and not dread so great an evil?

## MAXIM VII.

*That the worst of all misfortunes is to die in mortal sin.*

IT is the misery of miseries, because it is the beginning of eternal misery, the loss of all happiness, the source of all evils, without remedy, without recovery; in a word, it is eternal damnation. To comprehend this misfortune, consider if you can what it is to lose God, and that for ever; to be banished from heaven, and that for ever; to be condemned to the flames of hell, with the devils, and that for ever, without end, without cessation, without comfort, without hope: always in rage, always in despair, for having fallen into this dreadful calamity, after having been able to avoid it, after having despised God's grace, and lost such means of salvation. O *Theotime*, is it possible to think on this misfortune, and not stand in dread of it?

## MAXIM VIII.

*That this misfortune happens to many, and to those who think the least of it.*

IT happens to all those who have not time to do penance before their death, or having time, were not penitent at all, or as they ought, dying without the dispositions necessary for salvation. For this reason the Son of God has so often warned us to *take heed, watch, for ye know not when the time is*; you know not the day nor the hour†. Be then ready: for at what hour you think not, the son of man will come‡. What I say to you, I say to all: watch§.*

## MAXIM IX.

*That we must meditate often on death, judgment, and eternity.*

THIS is the chief means to avoid that so common a misfortune. He who shall reflect well on the last judgment, will be afraid

* Mar. xiii. 33. † Matt. xxv. 13. ‡ Luke xii. 40. § Mar. xiii. 37.

afraid to fall into ſin, or to continue in it ever ſo little. This is the advice of the wiſe man, which all men ought to have continually in their memory; *In all thy works remember thy laſt end, and thou ſhalt never ſin**. This young perſons ſeldom conſider. Think well on it, *Theotime*, that by reflecting on God's judgments you may avoid offending him.

## MAXIM X.

*That we muſt ſerve God for himſelf, and through love.*

ALthough the conſiderations of death, judgment, and eternity, be effectual and neceſſary to move us to virtue, nevertheleſs we muſt not ſtop there; it appertains only to ſervile ſouls to be guided by fear alone, generous ſouls ſerve God through love, and becauſe he deſerves to be beloved, honoured, and ſerved. Fear is good, but it muſt not be alone, love muſt perfect what fear has begun. O *Theotime*, how is it poſſible for a ſoul to ſerve a God ſo amiable in himſelf, and from whom ſhe has received all ſhe poſſeſſes, and expects all ſhe hopes for, otherwiſe than from a motive of love?

*Read* Part IV. Chap. II. *and* III. *and the inſtruction concerning communion*, Part II. Chap. III. Art. IV.

## MAXIM XI.

*That we muſt have a rule for our conduct, and that this rule ought to be the law of God, the example and doctrine of* Jeſus Chriſt, *and not the world, nor the example of others, nor cuſtom.*

IT is a common maxim among men, to do as others do; and to bring for a reaſon of their actions, that the world does ſo; that it is the cuſtom; that ſuch and ſuch act ſo. This is a wicked, falſe, and pernicious maxim. Men are not our rule, but God. The world is all full of error: men, whoever they be, are ſubject to failings. God is truth itſelf, he has given us his law to conduct us, he has commanded us to hearken to him: *Hear ye him†;* that is the rule we ought to follow. "Let not thoſe (ſays St. *Jerome*‡) "who make profeſſion of being the diſciples of truth, follow the "erring multitude. It is moſt ſafe to follow him who ſaith, he is "the way, the truth, and the life." Never govern yourſelf by the world, by cuſtom, or by the example of others: and in all your actions

* Eccli. vii. 40. † Matt. xvii. 5. ‡ Ep. ad Celant.

actions look not upon the practice nor judgment of men, but upon the law of God, and the doctrine of *Jesus Christ* and his church, which he has commanded us to hear and follow, and act nothing but what shall be conformable to that infallible rule.

## MAXIM XII.

*That the world is deceived in all its judgments and maxims.*

IT is easy to manifest this maxim by induction. The world places its sovereign happiness in riches, it desires them with earnestness, and seeks after them before all things. Truth assures us, that riches make not a man happy, they are frequently great impediments to salvation; *Happy is that people whose God is the Lord* *.

The world makes account, that there is no contentment but that which is found in the satisfaction of the senses, and in the pleasures of this life. And the truth is, that there is no solid pleasure but in virtue.

The world places honour in many things which are not honourable, as in esteem, reputation, dignities, places of honour, respect of men. But the truth is, that real honour consists in virtue, and is inseparable from it.

The world makes courage consist in taking revenge, and in not pardoning injuries. And the truth is, courage consists in pardoning, or else the Son of God had no courage, when he prayed on the cross for his persecutors, and was deceived when he commanded us to love our enemies. "Either the Son of God (says St. "*Bernard*†) is deceived, or else the world errs." But the Son of God is truth itself, which cannot be deceived: The world then is mistaken and errs in all its maxims: it is not the world therefore we are to follow, but *Jesus Christ*.

## MAXIM XIII.

*That to be united to God, we must contemn earthly things.*

YES, *Theotime*, for all that is in the world is vanity; there is nothing solid but God, and in God. *Vanity of vanities*, says the wise man, *and all is vanity*‡. All that is here is nothing, all passes like a shadow and smoke. For this reason the Apostle said, *I count all things but as dung, that I may gain Christ* §. And the

S well

* Ps. cxliii. 15. † Serm. 3 de Nativ. ‡ Eccles. i. 2. § Phil. iii. 8.

well beloved Disciple cries to all the faithful: *Love not the world, nor the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him: for all that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life. The world passeth away, and the concupiscence thereof**. "Make choice (adds St. *Augustine*) either to set your affection on "temporal things, and pass with time; or to love eternal goods, "and live for ever with God†."

## CHAP. XI.

### *Of perseverance.*

THIS, dear *Theotime*, is the last advice I have to give to compleat your instruction, it is the greatest and most necessary of all. It is to no purpose to have entered the path of virtue, nor to have made some progress therein, except we persevere to the end: It is perseverance which crowns a good life, and deserves the recompense, that finishes the great work of salvation, and introduces us into eternal happiness.

*Advantage of perseverance.*

It is a great happiness to have been faithful to the divine grace in youth, and also to have preserved virtue at our entering into a state of life; but it is a sad misfortune, when forgetting the great obligations we have of serving God, and abusing the favours we have received from his mercy, we unhappily abandon it to follow sin. *Wo be to them*, says the wise man, *that have lost patience, and that have forsaken the right ways, and have gone aside into crooked ways. What will they do, when the Lord shall begin to examine*‡*? Theotime*, what will they answer at that dreadful day of the divine judgment, when God shall make them see the greatness and multitude of his favours, and shall reproach their sinful ingratitude, their infidelity, their inconstancy in his service, the blindness with which they abandoned him, who is the fountain of all blessings, and the sole author of salvation? *It had been better for them*, says the Apostle St. *Peter*, *not to have known the way of Justice, than after they have known it, to turn back from that holy commandment, which was delivered to them*§.

There is no question but a good beginning in youth is highly necessary for a happy end, and a powerful means to attain it, but it

* 1 Joh. ii. 15, 16, 17. † Tract. 2 in 1 S. Joan. ‡ Eccli. ii. 15, 16. § 2 Pet. ii. 21.

it is not always purſued. It happens too often to men as to trees, which bear fair bloſſoms in the ſpring, and no fruit in autumn. The ſacred ſcripture furniſhes us with many examples of thoſe who have finiſhed their life in virtue, having embraced it in their youth; but it alſo produces ſome who have not perſevered, to teach men with what great care they ought to continue conſtant in the way of juſtice.

We have a convincing proof of this truth in the example I have often cited, of king *Joas*, who having lived in virtue from his tender youth till the age of forty years and more, ſullied the latter part of his reign by a diſgraceful end.

But how much more dreadful is the fall of *Solomon?* That prince had been favoured in his youth with extraordinary bleſſings. He had been bred up in virtue by the incredible care of his parents, as he himſelf teſtifies. He was in his youth the moſt pure, moſt holy, and the moſt accompliſhed of any that ever lived. God had done him the honour to ſpeak to him perſonally, and gave him permiſſion to petition whatever he pleaſed. He prudently aſked neither riches, nor pleaſures, nor glory, nor any of the things which young people are accuſtomed ſo greedily to ſeek after, but only virtue and wiſdom.

God was pleaſed with his choice, and endowed him with wiſdom ſuperlatively greater than had yet been, or ſhould be granted to any man beſides. With this great wiſdom he ſpends the better part of his life in eminent virtue, acceptable to God, honoured, and almoſt adored by men, who came from all parts of the world to hear his wiſdom; governing his people with equity and juſtice, inſtructing them in the ſervice of God by his wiſe diſcourſes, and by the ſacred books he had compoſed, full of divine wiſdom, dictated by the Holy Ghoſt himſelf*. After all this, *Theotime*, (who could believe it, if the ſcripture had not ſaid it?) after all theſe favours, and all theſe wonders, this incomparable man fell ſo unfortunately, as to be plunged into the depth of vice and idolatry. This great light was eclipſed, this wonderful wiſdom permitted itſelf to be ſurpriſed, and letting his heart be overcome by love of women, loſt in a ſhort time all his wiſdom, and became infatuated even to ſuch a degree, as to commit idolatry with his idolatrous women, and to adore as many idols as he had women of different religions †.



* Eccleſ. xii. 9. † 3 Kings ix

O human misery, how great art thou! O weakness and inconstancy of man! Who is there that ought not to tremble after this terrible example? If the highest virtues are shaken, what ought not common virtues to fear? Woe, and woe again to those who have lost perseverance, and who have departed from the path of virtue, to go astray in the broad road of vice!

Dear *Theotime*, let us learn by this example to *work out our salvation with fear and trembling* *; not to trust to our own past merits, but to be always upon our guard. *Let him that thinketh himself to stand, take heed lest he fall* †. Christ did not say, he who shall have begun, but *he that shall persevere to the end, he shall be saved* ‡.

*Means to acquire perseverance.*

To avoid this misfortune, see here the means you must practise.

1. Be faithful to divine grace; for as the holy council of *Trent* says, "Except we be "wanting to the grace of God, he will perfect in us the good "work he has begun, working in us the will and accomplish-"ment §."

2. Live always in humility, in fear, in a distrust of yourself, in the exercise of good works: for according to the doctrine of the same council, "Although every one should firmly trust to the "divine assistance, those nevertheless who think they stand, "ought to fear least they fall, and work their salvation with fear "and trembling, by labour, by watching, by alms, by prayers, by "offerings, by fasts, by charity. Because not being as yet rege-"nerated to glory, but only to the hopes of enjoying it, they "ought to stand in fear of the battle with the world, the flesh, "and the Devil, in which they must yet engage, and in which "they cannot conquer, unless by the grace of God they obey the "Apostle, who admonishes us not to live according to the flesh; "for if we live according to it, we shall die, but if by the spirit "we shall mortify in us the deeds of the flesh, we shall live."

3. The third means is diligently to perform these five things. 1. To fly the dangerous occasions of offending God; for he who preserves not himself from danger shall fall therein. 2. Not to fall into a remissness, or to rise as soon as we are fallen, because that easily leads to sin. 3. To avoid the sins of omission, and among others, those which are against the obligations of one's state; pious persons are frequently deceived in this point. 4. To preserve

* Phil. ii. 12. † 1 Cor. x. 12. ‡ Mat. xxiv. 13. § Sess. 6. c. 13.

preſerve yourſelf from a ſecret preſumption, which inſenſibly mingling itſelf with virtue, is a ſtrong tendency to vice, and the ruin of virtue. 5. To avoid a multitude of venial ſins, which being neglected lead to mortal. *He that contemneth ſmall things*, ſays the wiſe man, *ſhall fall by little and little* *.

4. The fourth means is, to examine often the condition of your ſoul, her habits, her inclinations, her affections; to diſcover thoſe which are ill, and correct them. For this reaſon you muſt frequently reflect upon yourſelf, and from time to time, or at leaſt once a year, review and renew your interior ſtate, that you may gain the ſtrength of a new life in the ſervice of God. To read often the advices given above in Chap. IX. and the Chriſtian maxims in Chap. X.

In fine, the great, neceſſary, and moſt effectual means, is to pray much, and beg of God frequently this holy perſeverance. Hence it is that the Son of God ſays, that *we muſt watch and pray* †; that *we muſt pray always* ‡ *without ceaſing*, ſays St. *Paul* §. St. *Auguſtine* ſays, that it is only granted to thoſe that pray for it. And the ſecond council of *Orange* teaches us, that even "the "faithful and ſaints ought always to implore the divine aſſiſtance, "that they may arrive at a good end, or perſevere in good "works ¶."

O *Theotime*, how happy would you be, if having begun to ſerve God in your tender years, you take care to ſay with *David* all your life, *Thou haſt taught me, O God, from my youth: and till now I will declare thy wonderful works. And unto old age and gray hairs, O God, forſake me not* ‖.

In concluſion, dear reader, remember, that life paſſes, death draws near, eternity approaches; life is but a moment, and on this moment depends eternity. O moment! O eternity! let us at leaſt employ this moment to ſerve our Creator, who deſerves an eternity of ſervice. Let us conſecrate ourſelves entirely during this mortal life, to that adorable goodneſs, who gives himſelf fully to us for all eternity. Let nothing be able to ſeparate us from his ſervice. *Who ſhall ſeparate us from the love of Chriſt*, ſays the divine Apoſtle **. O God, permit it not, but cauſe, by thy divine bounty, that our hearts be inſeparably united to thee; and that, performing thy



* Eccli. xix. 1. † Mar. xiii. 33. ‡ Luke xviii. 1. § 1 Theſ. v. 17.
¶ Chap. 10. ‖ Pſalm lxx. 17, 18. ** Rom. viii. 35.

will in all things, we may love thee with perſeverance in this life, to love, adore, and bleſs thee for ever in heaven, where thou liveſt and reigneſt world without end. *Amen.*

*The End of the* Firſt Volume.

THE

# INSTRUCTION of YOUTH

IN

# CHRISTIAN PIETY.

TAKEN OUT OF THE

Sacred Scriptures and Holy Fathers.

From the FRENCH

OF

CHARLES GOBINET, D. D.

VOL. II.

The FOURTH EDITION.

*To give subtilty to little ones, to the young man knowledge and understanding. A wise man shall hear, and shall be wiser.* Prov. i. 4, 5.




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MDCCLXXXIII.



## A DEDICATORY

# PRAYER

## TO OUR LORD

# *JESUS CHRIST.*

MY Lord and my God, *permit me alſo to conſecrate to thee this ſecond inſtruction, and to implore thy bleſſing upon it. The favour thou haſt been pleaſed to beſtow upon the firſt, gives me hopes that thou haſt yet a bleſſing reſerved for this ſecond; and that in conſideration of the ſubjects it treats of, which are thy ſacraments, thou wilt not fail to bleſs it. The whole deſign of it is to inſtruct thy children, to teach them to frequent and make a good uſe of the ſacraments which thou haſt inſtituted, as means to convey grace to their ſouls, and not to deſpiſe ſuch rich preſents beſtowed on them for ſecuring their ſalvation. We ſee to our great grief, that few have that eſteem for the ſacraments which is due to them; and that for want of the knowledge of their excellence, their dignity, and the benefits which from thence ariſe to us, many either neglect to approach them, or at leaſt do not always take care to bring along with them ſuitable diſpoſitions. Thou offereſt them the ſacrament of penance, that thereby they may be freed from the ſlavery of ſin; but, like the* Iſraelites *in the* Ægyptian *bondage, they chooſe rather to continue captives. Thou beſtoweſt upon them celeſtial food to nouriſh, and to ſtrengthen them, whom thou haſt received into thy favour; but becauſe they are ignorant of the excellence of this gift, they neglect to partake of it, and thus permit their ſouls to ſtarve in the deſert of this mortal life. This bread of angels agrees not with their depraved appetite, that prefers the onions of* Ægypt *before this heavenly* Manna. *Divine* Jeſus, *open their eyes, who live thus contented in their miſery. Make them feel the weight of their chains; make them ſenſible of the danger of that ſervitude, wherein they are detained by ſin; make them aſhamed of ſerving the Devil, that enemy of*

*thy glory, and their own ſalvation. Grant them grace to aſpire to that liberty, which thy children enjoy: to this end may they embrace the ſweet yoke of penance, and thereby be entirely converted to thee, by their actions teſtifying the ſincerity of their hearts. Grant that they may encreaſe and be ſtrengthened in thy grace by means of this celeſtial bread; and that by frequently feeding upon thy precious body and blood, they may happily paſs through the dangers of this life to the land of promiſe, which is thy heavenly kingdom, where thou liveſt and reigneſt eternally.*

TO

# TO THE

# READER.

*HERE preſent you,* Dear Reader, *with this ſecond inſtruction, for the uſe of young people, and all ſuch as are pleaſed to make uſe of it, that they may learn how rightly to employ thoſe two great means of ſalvation, Penance and the holy Euchariſt. I have diſcourſed already of theſe two ſacraments in the ſecond part of the firſt inſtruction: but I did it with that brevity, which is neceſſary to be obſerved in matters, treated of only incidentally. Since that time I have obſerved, that what I then ſaid of them was not enough to convey unto the minds of youth a right knowledge of thoſe two ſacraments. Therefore it ſeemed to me very proper, that they ſhould have a book, whereby they might be ſolidly inſtructed in what concerns theſe two important ſubjects, which they might make uſe of with advantage, when, deſirous of returning to God by a ſincere change of life, they ſtand in need of making a general* Confeſſion *of their life paſt. This book may again be a help if after ſuch a general confeſſion, they are willing to continue in the frequent uſe of theſe two ſacraments, thereby to preſerve the grace of God, and to advance in virtue. This was my motive for undertaking this inſtruction. In the firſt four parts of the* inſtruction concerning penance *are pointed out the proper means to return to God: The firſt of which is an* exhortation to a change of life, *and totally to addict ourſelves to virtue. In the ſecond is ſhewn the way to compaſs this deſign, by treating at large of* contrition; *of the enormity of ſin, and the practice of this great virtue. In the third and fourth are expounded* ſacramental confeſſion, *and* ſatisfaction. *In the fifth part are contained the* means of preſerving *the* grace, *which we have received by this ſacrament.*

*The* inſtruction *which follows* concerning communion *may alſo ſerve for the ſame end. This divine* ſacrament *is one of the chief means, which God has beſtowed upon us to preſerve us in his grace. Hence it is eaſy to perceive, that this inſtruction is not ſo much a ſecond book, as a continuation or concluſion of the firſt. I have taken an occaſion to intermix ſome neceſſary points, which we are obliged to know; as*

*the*

*the explication of the principal* mysteries *of our* faith, *which I have placed in the first part of the instruction concerning communion, together with the exposition of the three theological virtues,* faith, hope, *and* charity, *which you will find in the second part of the same instruction: virtues which are the ground-work of our salvation, and upon which,* " the house of God, *raised by his grace,* is built *." *I have also taken occasion to explain the commandments of God in the examen of sins, that persons may find in this book alone the explication of the principal points of Christian doctrine which every one is obliged to know.*

*It is my most earnest wish,* Dear Reader, *that God will enlighten your soul rightly to understand the truths, which he hath comprised in these life-giving sacraments, and that you may draw in abundance from these fountains of salvation the celestial waters of divine grace, which will preserve you in this life from the mortal heats of sin, and, rendering you fruitful in virtue and good works, make you worthy of everlasting life, the reward of pious endeavours.*

* St. Aug. de verb. Apost.

THE

THE

# CONTENTS

OF THE

## Second VOLUME.

## INSTRUCTIONS on PENANCE, &c.

### PART I.

CONtaining an exhortation to engage young perſons to return to God by penance, and a ſerious amendment of life *Page* 1
*Chap.* i. An exhortation, by which God calls upon men, and particularly young people, to return to him by penance 2
*Chap.* ii. Reflections upon the preceding exhortation; and firſt on the contents 3
*Chap.* iii. Second reflection, upon the goodneſs of God, in exhorting us to our converſion *ibid.*
*Chap.* iv. Third reflection, on the injury thoſe do to God who refuſe to be converted, or defer their converſion 5
*Chap.* v. Fourth reflection, upon God's anger againſt thoſe, who refuſe to yield to theſe exhortations 6
*Chap.* vi. Of the great puniſhment which God inflicts upon thoſe, who refuſe or defer their converſion 8
*Chap.* vii. The concluſion of this exhortation 11

### PART II.

OF contrition 12
*Chap.* i. What we are obliged to do in virtue of the precedent exhortation *ibid.*
*Chap.* ii. What penance is 13
*Chap.* iii. What contrition is 15
*Chap.* iv. Of the qualities or conditions which true contrition ought to have 16
*Chap.* v. Of perfect and imperfect contrition 20
*Chap.* vi. Of the means to obtain contrition 22
*Chap.* vii. Of the firſt means to obtain contrition, which are avoiding ſin, doing works of penance, and prayer 24
*Chap.* viii. Of the motives of contrition, and firſt of the grievouſneſs of ſin 25
*Chap.* ix. Continuation of the ſame ſubject, of the grievouſneſs of ſin 27
*Chap.* x. Another demonſtration of the grievouſneſs of ſin 29
*Chap.* xi. Of the dreadful effects of mortal ſin 31

*Article*

*Article* 1. The sad effects of sin in the soul 32
*Art.* 2. Of the effects of sin in heaven and upon earth 35
*Art.* 3. Of the effects of sin in hell 37
*Art.* 5. A continuation of the same subject 39
The conclusion of this article, of the pains of hell 44
*Art.* 5. Of the effects which sin produces in respect of God himself 45
*Art.* 6. Of the effects of sin in the person of *Jesus Christ* 47
*Chap.* xii. The practice of contrition upon the precedent motives 51
*Chap.* xiii. Examples of repentance taken out of holy writ 52

## PART III.

OF confession 57
*Chap.* i. Of the institution and necessity of confession *ibid*
*Chap.* ii. What sacramental confession is 59
*Chap.* iii. Of the conditions requisite for a good confession 60
*Chap.* iv. Of the defects in confession 62
*Chap.* v. Of the conditions necessary to make the confession entire 63
*Chap.* vi. Advice concerning the number of sins 65
*Chap.* vii. Advice concerning the circumstances of sins 66
*Chap.* viii. How great an evil it is to conceal a mortal sin in confession 68
*Chap.* ix. Of the preparation for confession, or examination of conscience 73
*Chap.* x. Of the distinction which must be made betwixt mortal and venial sins 75
*Chap.* xi. Of the confession of venial sins 76
*Chap.* xii. Of interior and exterior sins, or the sins of thought and action 78
*Chap.* xiii. Of sins of commission and omission 80
*Chap.* xiv. Of the sins of ignorance, frailty, and malice 81
*Article* 1. Of the sins of ignorance *ibid.*
*Art.* 2. Of the sins of frailty 83
*Art.* 3. Of the sins of malice 84
*Art.* 4. Of the sins which spring from a vitious habit 86
*Chap.* xv. Of sins that are committed through error or doubt 87
*Chap.* xvi. Of the sins which we commit in others 89
A table of sins 91
The examen on the first commandment *ibid.*
Sins against faith *ibid.*
Sins against hope 92
Sins against charity *ibid.*
Sins against the virtue of religion *ibid.*
Sins against the care we are bound to have of our salvation *ibid.*
The examen on the Second Commandment 93
The examen on the Third Commandment *ibid.*
The examen on the Fourth Commandment 94
The examen on the Fifth Commandment 95
The examen on the Sixth Commandment *ib.*
The examen on the Seventh Commandment 96
The examen on the Eighth Commandment *ibid.*
The examen on the Ninth & Tenth Commandments 97
The examen on the precepts of the church *ibid.*
The examen concerning the seven capital sins *ibid.*
Of the sin of pride *ibid.*
Of covetousness, luxury and sloth 98
Of gluttony *ibid.*
Of envy *ibid.*
Of the sin of anger *ibid.*
The examen of the sins which one commits by another *ibid.*

## PART IV.

OF satisfaction 99
*Chap.* i. What satisfaction is *ib.*
*Chap.* ii. God pardoning the sin, yet inflicts a temporal punishment 100
*Chap.* iii. Excellent reasons out of the council of *Trent* to shew why God,

God, remitting the sin by penance, obliges the penitent sinner to a temporal punishment 102
*Chap.* iv. Wherein satisfaction consists, and whether it be essential to the sacrament of penance 104
*Chap.* v. Of the conditions which satisfaction ought to have in regard of the Confessor 105
*Chap.* vi. Of the conditions of satisfaction in respect of the penitent 109
*Chap.* vii. Of the works which may be enjoined for penance 112
*Chap.* viii. That the penitent who truly desires to secure his salvation, ought not to satisfy himself with the penance enjoined him in the sacrament, but he ought to perform others 113
*Chap.* ix. Of sacramental absolution. What it is, wherein it consists, and what are its effects 115
*Chap.* x. Of the dispositions requisite for receiving absolution, and the cases wherein it ought to be refused or deferred 116
*Chap.* xi. In what manner a Confessor ought to behave in regard to penitents in habitual sin 119
*Chap.* xii. An objection answered 124
*Chap.* xiii. Other objections answered 129
*Chap.* xiv. Of the choice of a Confessor 138

## PART V.

OF the preservation of grace after confession, against a relapse into sin 141
*Chap.* i. Of the importance of this subject *ibid.*
*Chap.* ii. How great an evil is the relapse into sin 143
*Chap.* iii. Of three great indignities, which are found in the sin of relapse, ingratitude, perfidiousness, and contempt of God 144
*Chap.* iv. Those who relapse frequently into their sins, expose their salvation to great danger 146
*Chap.* v. Habitual relapses into sin give just ground to suspect the validity of preceding confessions 149
*Chap.* vi. An excellent admonition of St. *Gregory*, concerning the false repentance of habitual sinners 151
*Chap.* vii. By habitual relapses we lose great part of the benefit of our precedent good confessions 153
*Chap.* viii. The last state of the relapsing sinner is worse than the first 154
*Chap.* ix. Frequent relapses into sin lead to final impenitence 156
*Chap.* x. What directors should do to prevent the habitual relapses of their penitents 158
*Chap.* xi. Of the means which penitents ought to observe in order to avoid relapses into sin 162

# INSTRUCTIONS

## CONCERNING THE

# HOLY COMMUNION.

THE Preface *Page* 165
Of the neceſſity of this inſtruction, and the order to be obſerved therein *ibid.*

## PART I.

OF the truths we ought to know concerning the ſacrament of the Euchariſt *Page* 166
*Chap.* i. Of faith 167
*Queſt.* 1. What are we obliged to know concerning faith in general? *ibid.*
*Queſt.* 2. What is faith? *ibid.*
*Queſt.* 3. Who is the author of faith? *ibid.*
*Qu.* 4. What is the action, object, and motive of faith? 168
*Qu.* 5. By what means does God reveal the truth unto us? *ibid.*
*Qu.* 6. Which is the rule of faith? *ib.*
*Qu.* 7. What qualities or conditions ought our faith to have? 171
*Chap.* ii. Of the things we are obliged to believe 173
*Art.* 1. What are we obliged to believe of God? *ibid.*
*Art.* 2. What are we obliged to believe of *Jeſus Chriſt?* 174
*Qu.* 1. What is *Jeſus Chriſt?* *ibid.*
*Qu.* 2. Why was he made man? *ibid.*
*Qu.* 3. This incarnation in what does it conſiſt? *ibid.*
*Qu.* 4. How was this divine union accompliſhed? 175
*Qu.* 5. What is it that the Son of God has done for our redemption? *ibid.*
*Art.* 3. What are we obliged to believe concerning the church? 176
*Art.* 4. What are we obliged to believe concerning the ſacraments? 178
*Chap.* iii. Of the holy Euchariſt 179
*Art.* 1. Of the real preſence of the Son of God in the holy Euchariſt, and of what we are to believe concerning this ſacrament? 180
*Art.* 2. Of the effects of the holy euchariſt 181
*Art.* 3. Of the diſpoſitions required to communicate as we ought 182
*Art.* 4. Of an unworthy communion 184
*Art.* 5. Of the end we ought to propoſe to ourſelves in holy communion 188

## PART II.

OF the practice of communion, or what we muſt do to communicate as we ought 190
*Chap.* i. Of the neceſſity of faith to communicate well *ibid.*
*Art.* 1. To communicate well, it is not ſufficient to have faith, but we muſt practiſe the acts thereof, and how profitable they are in communion 191
*Art.* 2. Of the nature of acts of faith for communion 193
An act of faith on the real preſence of *Jeſus Chriſt* in the bleſſed ſacrament *ibid.*
On the wonders which occur in the bleſſed

bleſſed ſacrament 193
On the effects which the holy Euchariſt produces in the ſoul 195
*Chap.* ii. Of hope, the ſecond diſpoſition for communion 197
*Art.* 1. What is hope? *ibid.*
*Art.* 2. Of the advantages which we expect through hope 198
*Art.* 3. It is neceſſary to diſtinguiſh a righteous hope from that which is vitious 200
*Art.* 4. The effects of hope 202
*Art.* 5. The bleſſed ſacrament of the Euchariſt is of great uſe to fortify and augment the virtue of hope 204
*Art.* 6. The practice of hope is a good diſpoſition to communicate well 206
*Art.* 7. Acts of hope for communion *ibid.*
An act of hope before communion *ib.*
After communion 208
*Chap.* iii. Of charity, the third diſpoſition for the worthy receiving of the bleſſed ſacrament 210
*Art.* 1. How neceſſary charity is, to communicate well *ibid.*
*Art.* 2. We muſt carefully diſtinguiſh falſe charity from true 212
*Art.* 3. What true charity is 213
*Art.* 4. Of the motives of the love of God 214
*Art.* 5. Of the particular motives of the love of God drawn from the bleſſed ſacrament 216
*Art.* 6. Of acts of charity before communion 217
After communion 218
Acts of love towards *Jeſus Chriſt* 220
An offering to *Jeſus Chriſt* *ibid.*
A prayer to *Jeſus Chriſt* 221
*Art.* 7. Advice concerning the foregoing forms of faith, hope, and charity *ibid.*
*Art.* 8. Of prayer to the bleſſed Virgin, before and after communion 222
*Art.* 9. How we ought to ſpend the day of our communion 223
*Art.* 10. Of frequent communion 224
*Art.* 11. When and how often we ought to communicate? 226

# INSTRUCTIONS on PRAYER.

## PART I.

ON prayer in general 229
*Chap.* i. On the excellence of prayer *ibid.*
*Chap.* ii. On the neceſſity of prayer 232
*Chap.* iii. On two kinds of prayer, mental and vocal 234
*Chap.* iv. On the conditions of prayer 235
*Chap.* v. On joining almſdeeds and faſting with prayer 239
*Chap.* vi. On the time and place for prayer 240
*Chap.* vii. On the invocation of ſaints 242
*Chap.* viii. On the Lord's prayer 243
*Chap.* ix. On the angelical ſalutation 249

## PART II.

ON meditation, or mental prayer 252
*Art.* 1. What is meditation? *ibid.*
*Art.* 2. Without meditating it is hard to ſecure our ſalvation 253
*Art.* 3. Meditation is not an invention of man, but of God *ibid.*
*Art.* 4. Meditation is not ſo difficult as many imagine 254
*Art.* 5. Meditation may be rendered eaſy 255
*Art.* 6. Young perſons are capable of meditation, and have need of it *ibid.*
*Art.* 7. A confirmation of the former truths out of the ſacred ſcriptures 257
*Art.* 8. On the great benefit of meditation *ibid.*
*Art.* 9. The method of meditation 259
*Art.* 10. Subjects proper for meditation 263
*Art.* 11. Other eaſy and profitable ſubjects of meditation 265
*Art.* 12. The practice of meditation 267
*Art.* 13. General advice concerning Meditation 270

# INSTRUCTIONS on PENANCE,

## AND ON THE

## Means of returning to GOD by a true Converſion.

I Shall divide theſe inſtructions into five parts.

The *Firſt* contains an exhortation to him, who is in mortal ſin, to return to God by Penance, and a ſerious amendment of life.

The *Second* treats of contrition, which is the firſt part of penance; of the motives which may excite it, and of the means to obtain it.

The *Third* treats of confeſſion, and what ought chiefly to be obſerved therein.

The *Fourth* gives inſtructions concerning ſatisfaction, and the works of penance, which ought to be performed for ſins paſt.

In the *Fifth* we ſpeak againſt a relapſe into ſin; of its dangerous conſequences; and of the means to avoid that dreadful rock, whereon the greateſt part of the world are ſhipwrecked, and unfortunately loſt.

## PART I.

*Containing an exhortation to engage young perſons to return to God by penance, and a ſerious amendment of life.*

ALL that we have ſaid in the firſt part of the inſtruction of youth, is one continued exhortation to young people to live virtuouſly in their youth, and to correct their lives by penance, if they be already engaged in ſin, as it too frequently happens. For this reaſon it is almoſt unneceſſary to exhort them here to think ſeriouſly of their converſion and ſalvation: it might ſuffice to refer them to the reading of that firſt part.

But that I may more effectually remove from you, dear *Theotime*, every pretext of delay in a buſineſs as important as neceſſary for your good, I here propoſe to you an exhortation to repentance, expreſſed in the words of God himſelf.

## CHAP. I.

*An exhortation, by which God calls upon men, and particularly young people, to return to him by penance.*

IT is in the firſt chapter of the book of *Proverbs*, dictated by the Holy Ghoſt chiefly for the inſtruction of young perſons, where the divine wiſdom ſpeaks in this manner. Give ear, *Theotime*, to the voice of God, who addreſſes himſelf to you, and comprehend well what he ſays.

*O children, how long will you love childiſhneſs, and fools covet thoſe things, which are hurtful to themſelves, and the unwiſe hate knowledge? Turn ye at my reproof: behold I will utter my ſpirit to you, and will ſhew you my words. Becauſe I called, and you refuſed: I ſtretched out my hand, and there was none that regarded. You have deſpiſed all my counſel, and have neglected my reprehenſions. I alſo will laugh in your deſtruction, and will mock, when that ſhall come to you, which you feared. When ſudden calamity ſhall fall on you, and deſtruction, as a tempeſt, ſhall be at hand: when tribulation and diſtreſs ſhall come upon you: then ſhall they call upon me, and I will not hear: they ſhall riſe in the morning and ſhall not find me: becauſe they have hated inſtruction, and received not the fear of the Lord, nor conſented to my counſel, but deſpiſed all my reproof. Therefore they ſhall eat the fruit of their own way, and ſhall be filled with their own devices. The turning away of little ones ſhall kill them, and the proſperity of fools ſhall deſtroy them. But he that ſhall hear me, ſhall reſt without terror, and ſhall enjoy abundance without fear of evils**.

Thus does the Almighty call men to their converſion, and preſs them to think on their ſalvation. But I beſeech you, *Theotime*, be not ſatisfied with once reading thoſe ſacred words; offer not ſuch an affront to the ſpeech which God himſelf addreſſes to you, as to paſs it over ſlightly; read it often, till you have perfectly underſtood it, and deeply imprinted it in your mind and heart. Deſiſt not from reading, until you are reſolved to obey, and perform what it requires; and to the end it may make a greater impreſſion, and produce more plentiful fruit in your mind, read alſo theſe following reflections.

CHAP.

* Prov. i. 22, &c.

## CHAP. II.

*Reflections upon the preceding exhortation; and first, on the contents.*

IF you consider well this divine exhortation you will find that it contains five parts.

In the *First*, Almighty God, that you may enter into yourself, reproaches you like a tender parent for your blindness, which makes you run after your own destruction; and shews you that you act not like a man, but like a child, like an idiot, like a madman.

*Secondly*, He exhorts you with a fatherly goodness to forsake your perverse ways, and return to him by a true conversion.

*Thirdly*, Because you have often resisted his divine admonitions, and the interior motions of his grace, he threatens you with his anger and severest indignation, if you continue to despise his goodness.

*Fourthly*, He foretels the sad misfortunes that shall befal you in punishment of your obduateness: the bare reading whereof is sufficient to make you tremble with dread and apprehension.

Lastly, he opposes to these misfortunes the blessings promised to those who hear his voice, follow his admonitions, and live according to his holy will.

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## CHAP. III.

*Second reflection, upon the goodness of God in exhorting us to our conversion.*

CONsider *first*, and weigh attentively, that God, who invites you to return to him by repentance and a holy life, is he whom you have most grievously offended, whose friendship you have slighted, whose indignation you have incurred. Through sin you are become an enemy to God, who may justly destroy you for ever. Yet he is the first that invites you to be reconciled to him, and urges you to return to his favour. He himself seeks you, he prevents and exhorts you to return to your duty, but all to no effect!

*God, though offended, invites us to repent.*

You cannot find a similar example amongst men, of one who, being offended, goes to meet his enemy and invite him to a reconciliation;

ciliation; yet this example of God himself, who does much more for your sake, does not soften your heart into repentance. Can there be an obdurateness like this?

*The greatness of him who invites us to repent.*

But consider in the *second place*, the exalted dignity of the person who presses your return to his favour; it is no less than that of God himself, who is infinite in greatness, in power and majesty: before whom all the grandeur of the world is but dust and ashes; who makes the powers of heaven and the pillars of the firmament to tremble. This God, so great and powerful humbles himself so far, as to go and meet a wretched creature, an ungrateful and rebellious man, who has forgotten the favours of his creator, despised his commands, and forfeited his friendship; God seeks man even in the bottom of that abyss, into which mortal sin has plunged him, in order to solicit him to come forth, offering his hand to draw him from that depth of misery: yet this hardened wretch shuts his ears, that he may not hear the voice of God who offers his release. This is you yourself, *Theotime*, who treat in this manner Almighty God, when you refuse to obey his voice, who calls you to repentance. If a King should shew such bounty towards a criminal, and the wretch should refuse the favour of his prince, would it not be without example, and would not men say, that he had lost his sense and reason? What ought you not to say and judge of yourself, who act thus in respect of God?

*God invites without interest.*

*Thirdly*, If God received any benefit by your conversion, this might somewhat (though but little) diminish your esteem for that excessive bounty which he manifests by seeking you first. But the truth is, he can receive no advantage; all that he seeks is your good, and not his own: he will not be more happy if you are saved, nor less blessed if you be damned; God is no less glorified by his justice, than by his mercy. *What doth it profit God*, it is said in the book of Job, *if thou be just? or what dost thou give him if thy way be unspotted* *. The whole advantage accrues to yourself, not to him; it is your happiness, and not his. Indeed he takes a great pleasure in extending his mercy, and exerting his goodness towards those who do not render themselves unworthy of his favours; notwithstanding which he will rejoice in the punishment of the wicked. *As the Lord*, saith he, *rejoiced upon you before doing good*

* Job. xxii. 3.

*good to you, and multiplying you: so he shall rejoice destroying and bringing you to nought* *.

Must not our obstinacy be desperate, which stands out against so disinterested an invitation to mercy, and continues so long insensible to the concerns of salvation? We may well cry out with St. *Jerome*, "O the mercy of God and the ingratitude of man! after repeated offences God calls us to repentance, and yet we resist the "strongest attempts of mercy for our conversion."

## CHAP. IV.

*Third reflection, on the injury those do to God who refuse to be converted, or defer their conversion.*

AS the goodness of God to sinners seems not to be able to advance farther than to seek and court their friendship; so the wickedness of man cannot reach to a higher pitch, or do a greater injury to God, than by neglecting and despising the wonderful goodness he manifests on this occasion.

In order to judge of the greatness of this injury, we need but reflect on the behaviour of God to man, and on that of man to God.

The divine goodness makes that condescension to man which man denies to his fellow creature. It may sometimes happen, that the offender begs pardon of the offended, and sues for a reconciliation: then particular reasons may be assigned; either he is inferior to the person offended, or has received former favours, perhaps expects a continuance of them, or dreads some prejudice, and therefore seeks to regain the friendship he has lost. But that a person heinously offended by his inferior, against the strictest ties of humanity and gratitude, and from whom he can never expect a favour, nor fear an injury; (for example, a master, superior, king, or benefactor;) that this person should seek his friendship by whom he had been grievously offended, is what one man never does in regard of another. Yet God does this with respect to man, that is a master to his servant, a king to his subject, a judge to his criminal, and, that I may comprise all in one word, God to his rebellious and ungrateful creature; in this he manifests a goodness and love which are his special attributes. *In this is charity*, says St. *John, because he first loved us* †. *Even then*, says St. *Paul*, *when we*



* Deut. xxviii. 63. † 1 Joh. iv. 10.

*were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son**. And how does man behave on this occasion?

You know without doubt, *Theotime*, what his duty is; it is to yield to this affectionate love, and cast himself into the arms of this infinite goodness, which invites him so graciously: but be amazed at what he does, and what you yourself have so frequently repeated.

*A singular affront.*

This God, whom you have so grievously offended, seeks after you first, and exhorts you to return to him, with a gracious offer of pardon. This God, so great and powerful, who has no need of you, invites and entreats you to return to his favour. To him will arise as much glory from your damnation, in punishing you by his justice, as from your salvation, in making you partake of his mercy; yet out of a pure desire of your happiness, he stoops so low as to invite, and urge your conversion, and you will not hearken to him, but refuse, or at least delay being attracted by his love, or doing what he requires of you, although the advantage be all your own. Can there be an affront like this?

*Job* in his afflictions complained, that even his servants did not regard him, but insolently scoffed at the requests he made them. *I called my servant, and he gave me no answer, I entreated him with my own mouth*†. Judge then how justly God may complain of you, whilst you continue in your evil ways, and remain deaf to his remonstrances: will not he have reason to make the same complaint as he did in times past of the *Jews? I have spread forth my hands*, says he, *all the day to an unbelieving people, who walk in a way that is not good after their own thoughts*‡. That which a master will not submit to in respect of his servant, who is but a man like himself, God does in regard of you, and you are inflexible: or what is still more, God condescends lower to you than a servant will to his master, by pressing and entreating you to be reconciled, as if he stood in need of your friendship.

## CHAP. V.

*Fourth reflection, upon God's anger against those who refuse to yield to these exhortations.*

THE injury of this refusal being such as I have said, or rather above all that we can think or imagine, it is certain that it highly

* Rom. v. 10. † Job xix. 16. ‡ Isai. lxv. 2.

highly provokes God's anger againſt thoſe who render themſelves guilty thereof: "How great is this injury, and what chaſtiſements "ought it not to expect: when man, a vile worm of the earth, "is ſo impudent, as to refuſe to hear the voice of his creator*," who ſpeaks to him in order to his ſalvation.

This refuſal greatly provokes the anger of Almighty God, as it is a contempt of his divine words and admonitions. Of all injuries, contempt is the moſt inſupportable; and of all contempts there is none greater, than that by which one refuſes a reconciliation with his ſovereign; particularly when he offers it himſelf, and expreſſes his deſire of it. What muſt then the like contempt be, when ſhown to Almighty God himſelf?

We need but conſider this attentively, to perceive how injurious it is to Almighty God, whoſe indignation it raiſes againſt thoſe who render themſelves guilty of it.

*God's own expreſſion of his anger.*

In the 65th chapter of *Iſaias* God numbers up the iniquities of his people, and after reproaching them for their enormous ingratitude, he ſays, that he will deſtroy them for all their crimes, and particularly for their contempt of thoſe mild exhortations which he ſo often made them for their converſion and ſalvation. *And you that have forſaken the Lord, that have forgotten my holy mount, I will number you in the ſword, and you ſhall all fall by ſlaughter becauſe I called, and you did not anſwer: I ſpoke, and you did not hear: and you did evil in my eyes, aud you have choſen the things that diſpleaſe me* †.

In the following chapter he repeats the ſame menaces, where he ſays, that as the wicked take a delight in the things that diſpleaſe him, ſo he will take a pleaſure in bringing upon them all the evils that they feared; and then adds the reaſon; *Becauſe I called, and there was none that would anſwer: I have ſpoken, and they heard not* ‡.

He ſpeaks more effectually in the 7th chapter of the prophet *Jeremy: And now, becauſe you have done all theſe works, ſaith the Lord; and I have ſpoken to you riſing up early, and ſpeaking, and you have not heard: and I have called you, and you have not anſwered: I will do to this houſe, in which my name is called upon and in which you truſt, and to the place which I have given you and your fathers, as I did to Silo. And I will caſt you away from before my face, as I have caſt away all your brethren, the whole ſeed of Ephraim* §.



* S. Bernard Serm. 25. de diverſis. † Iſai. lxv. 11, 12. ‡ Iſai. lxvi. 4. § Jer. vii. 13, 14, 15.

And to shew how great his indignation was against that people for slighting his words, and the exhortations which he had so often made them for their conversion, he forbids his prophet to pray for them, and to oppose himself by his prayers to the design he had to punish them, and revenge himself. *Therefore do not thou pray for this people, nor take to thee praise and supplication for them, and do not withstand me: for I will not hear thee* *.

Could God give a stronger proof of his indignation against those who refuse to be converted, since he will not that others should appease him by their prayers, or endeavour to hinder the execution of his justice?

But if he was thus exasperated against the *Jews*, how can we expect he should be less so against Christians, and against us, *Theotime*, who equally contemn his divine grace, and who continue in our disorderly and sinful ways, after so many pressing exhortations to leave them? "For all that God spoke to the people of the "*Jews*, ought to be understood of us, if we commit the same "faults that the *Jews* did †.

## CHAP. VI.

*Of the great punishment which God inflicts upon those who refuse or defer their conversion.*

ALL the passages I have alleged, sufficiently shew the heavy chastisement which God inflicts on those who thus contemn him: the scripture contains many more. But we need not seek farther than in this exhortation of God, which we have spoken of above. Learn from God himself what you ought to fear, and the misfortunes that will befal you, if you resist any longer the desire he has of your salvation.

This punishment is contained in these words. *I will laugh at your destruction, and mock:* words full of terror, which ought to make all those tremble who are in mortal sin. It is for such (according to the advice of St. *Gregory* ‡), "to learn hence from the "mouth of God himself, in what manner he will punish those "whose conversion he has expected a long time, but all in vain."

By these words God threatens to revenge himself of those at the hour of their death, who continue in their sins; to punish their wicked

* Jer. vii. 16. † S. Hier. in c. vii. Jerem. ‡ Lib. 18. mor. c. 7.

wicked life with an unfortunate end, and treat them at that laſt hour, as they have dealt with him during their life. Is not this moſt juſt and reaſonable? They abandon God during their life, and God abandons them at the hour of their death. They refuſe to hearken when he ſpeaks, and preſſes them to their converſion; they are deaf to his admonitions, and will liſten to nothing but their own paſſions, and follow nothing but their pleaſures: their whole conduct is a general contempt of God, who by a juſt but dreadful puniſhment will act in reſpect of them as a provoked enemy, who ſcoffs at his conquered foes, and inſults over that exceſs of miſery, to which he ſees them reduced.

He will behold them ſurpriſed by ſome dreadful accident, or a mortal illneſs, which in a ſmall time will carry them off: he will ſee them trying all means to eſcape, overwhelmed with grief, troubled with fear and trembling, tormented with the remorſe of their guilty conſciences, calling to him for ſuccour and deliverance, when it is too late: he will become deaf to their prayers, as they would not give ear to his admonitions: he will not hearken to their deſires who were always hardened againſt his moſt preſſing invitations to mercy: he will not now give them time for repentance, becauſe they refuſed it when it was in their power. Thus will they find themſelves forced to abandon this mortal life, with all the pleaſures which they loved, more than either God or their ſalvation, to be doomed to an eternal death, where for fleeting pleaſures they ſhall feel everlaſting torments.

It is thus, *Theotime*, that God ſhall treat thoſe who contemn his favours, and refuſe to hearken to his voice when he invites them to their ſalvation. And thus does he treat them daily; and that you may better judge of this chaſtiſement of God, take notice of three great evils contained in it.

The firſt is an unprovided death, which he threatens to thoſe who in the courſe of their lives neglected the ordinary means to diſpoſe themſelves for it. *When ſudden calamity ſhall fall on you, and deſtruction, as a tempeſt, ſhall be at hand.* *The evils of this puniſhment.*

The ſecond is an oppreſſion of grief, and anguiſh in that dreadful ſurpriſe; pains of body and ſickneſs, anguiſh of ſoul and conſcience: *When tribulation and diſtreſs ſhall come upon you.*

The third, which is the moſt dreadful, is God's forſaking them in their laſt and frightful extremity; and ſo utterly does he abandon

don them, that he will never more hearken to their prayers and cries: *Then ſhall they call upon me, and I will not hear.*

All theſe evils will befal them in puniſhment of their obſtinacy in ſin, and refuſal to be converted. *Becauſe they have hated inſtruction, and received not the fear of the Lord.*

I wiſh this chaſtiſement were as rare as it is terrible, but it too often takes place againſt thoſe who ſo repeatedly contemn his holy inſpirations.

*The witneſſes of this puniſhment.*

All Chriſtians who are either dead, or daily die in mortal ſin (of whom the multitude is innumerable) are witneſſes of this truth; ſome of that character, are ſurpriſed by ſickneſs or unforeſeen accidents, wherein they die without the benefit of the ſacraments, or receive them without any regular preparation, and in very doubtful diſpoſitions, or if a ſufficient time be granted for this preparation, they delay until the laſt extremity, being more taken up with the apprehenſion of death, than with the weighty concerns of ſalvation; others have an opportunity of approaching the ſacraments, but are void of a true ſorrow, being more grieved for the evils that ſurround them, than from any motive of true repentance. Theſe, notwithſtanding the faireſt outward appearances of a converſion, (which ignorant people call *dying well*) find themſelves diſappointed of that mercy they have ſo long abuſed. All theſe, I ſay, bear witneſs to this deplorable truth.

In ſhort, *Theotime*, it cannot be denied but that there are a great number of Chriſtians damned: it is alſo moſt certain, that this happens becauſe they have not done true penance for their ſins before death. And why have they not done it? Death ſurpriſed them in the ſtate of ſin, and did not give them time or means to do penance, or at leaſt to perform it as they ought. But how happened it that they were ſo ſurpriſed? unleſs, by the juſt judgment of God, whoſe menaces were executed, wherewith he ſo often threatened to puniſh their obdurate hearts, by ſurpriſing them when they thought the leaſt of it, and abandoning them at the hour of their death.

They muſt be extremely deaf, and in a deep lethargy, who are not awakened with theſe thunder-claps; they muſt be very inſenſible, not to fear the dreadful effects of theſe menaces of Almighty God, which daily befal numbers. Apprehend this greateſt of all

mis-

misfortunes. That which happens to many may perhaps happen to you; and if it ſhould, you are loſt for ever.

## CHAP. VII.

*The concluſion of this exhortation.*

AS this ſolemn exhortation comes from God, it is proper alſo that he himſelf ſhould conclude it, and that we ſhould learn from him what we ought to reſolve and perform, after we have heard his voice that calls us to our ſalvation. St. *Paul* exhorts Chriſtians not to be rebellious to the voice of God, and not to imitate the obdurateneſs and rebellion of the *Jews*, which God puniſhed ſo rigorouſly: *Wherefore*, (as the Holy Ghoſt ſaith) *To day if you ſhall hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation; in the day of temptation in the deſert, where your fathers tempted me**.

He goes on, and urges ſtrongly this advice, as well in this chapter as the following; where he ſhews, that the *Jews* were not rejected by God, but for their incredulity and reſiſtance to his words. *To whom did he ſwear that they ſhould not enter into his reſt: but to them that were incredulous? and we ſee that they could not enter in becauſe of unbelief*†.

He adds afterwards, how Chriſtians ought to fear the like chaſtiſement: *Let us fear therefore leſt the promiſe being left of entering into his reſt, any of you ſhould be thought to be wanting.—Let us haſten therefore to enter into that reſt: leſt any man fall into the ſame example of unbelief*‡.

About the end of this Epiſtle, he renews this ſo important an admonition by theſe words, which ought to be engraved on the hearts of Chriſtians. *See that you refuſe not him that ſpeaketh. For if thoſe eſcaped not who refuſed him that ſpoke upon earth; much more ſhall not we, that turn away from him that ſpeaketh to us from heaven*§.

Theſe admonitions the Apoſtle gives to all thoſe whom God has ſo favoured as to call them by his voice to their converſion. Conſider them attentively, with the reaſons he alledges, and think well on what you have to do. Aſſure yourſelf, that it is to you that God addreſſes himſelf, when you have heard the above-mentioned preſſing exhortation, which he makes with a view to your converſion. Be afraid of falling into the hands of that divine juſtice, which puniſhed

* Heb. iii. 7, 8, 9. † Heb. iii. 18, 19. ‡ Heb. iv. 1, 11. § Heb. xii. 25.

punished the obstinacy of the *Jews*. Yield at last to the voice of God, and to the desire he has of your salvation; make now a firm resolution of returning to him by penance, and a perfect change of life; for the effecting which I propose the following means.

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## PART II.

## *Of CONTRITION.*

### CHAP. I.

*What we are obliged to do in virtue of the preceding exhortation.*

WE read in the *Acts of the Apostles*, that the *Jews* and other inhabitants of *Jerusalem*, having heard the first sermon which St. *Peter* made them concerning the death and resurrection of the son of God, upon the day of *Pentecost*, were so moved, that they immediately desired to know what they should do to be saved. *Now when they had heard these things*, saith the scripture, *they had compunction in their heart, and they said to Peter and to the rest of the Apostles: What shall we do, men and brethren? But Peter said to them: Do penance, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of your sins: and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost* *.

Dear *Theotime*, if the words, which you have read above, have made that impression on your mind, which they ought, your heart will certainly be softened into compunction, unless you be more hardened than the *Jews*. I cannot believe this of you; wherefore, methinks I hear you enquire of me, what must I do, that I may obey the voice of God, and become a good and real convert?

To which I answer with the prince of the Apostles, do penance for your sins, and receive the sacrament, not of baptism, which having once received, you cannot repeat, but of penance, to obtain hereby the remission of your sins, and the grace of the Holy Ghost, which will assist you to lead a new life. Let us betake ourselves to holy penance, which is a second baptism, a baptism of tears and sorrow, to cleanse therewith all our sins. "Let us wash "our consciences with tears, who have defiled our lives by sin †." Let us weep in the sight of God our creator, and cast ourselves into the arms of our heavenly Father, whilst yet he has them open to receive

* Acts ii. 37, 38. † S. Ambros.

ceive us, and so lovingly calls us to him. Let us not delay, lest he may shut them in punishment of our incredulity: Let us prevent his anger by having recourse to his mercy. *Let us go therefore with confidence*, saith that divine Apostle, *to the throne of grace: that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid* *.

## CHAP. II.

### *What penance is.*

SINCE we cannot return to God after sin by any other way, than that of penance; it is of the last importance to know what this is, without which we cannot be saved. *Except you be penitent, you shall all likewise perish* †.

This penance which is so necessary may be considered two ways: as a virtue, and as a sacrament, for it includes both these excellent qualities.

1. It is one of the Christian virtues, which has for its object and end the destruction of sin in him who has committed it, and the satisfaction of the divine justice by sorrow and good works.

2. It is also one of the seven sacraments of the new law, being raised to that dignity by *Jesus Christ*, when he gave to his Apostles and their successors power to forgive sins.

As a virtue, divines define it thus. A virtue or gift of God, which makes us deplore and hate the sins which we have committed, with a purpose to repair past faults, and never to offend in future. *Penance as a virtue.*

Its principal acts are *Confession*, *Contrition*, and *Satisfaction*.

*Confession* is a declaration or acknowledgment that we have sinned before God, by which we own ourselves guilty, and worthy of punishment: it being certain, that the first step necessary to obtain pardon for a fault, is to acknowledge it, and declare ourselves guilty. It was for this reason that *David* said, that he had confessed his sins before God, and had obtained pardon ‡.

*Contrition* is a regret or sorrow for having offended God; acknowledging the crime is not sufficient to obtain pardon, except we also testify a regret and displeasure of heart, without which it is impossible to obtain it.

*Satisfaction* is a punishment voluntarily suffered to compensate the injury done to divine justice, which, in pardoning sin, obliges the

* Heb. iv. 16. † Luke xiii. 3. ‡ Psalm xxxi. 5.

the penitent to undergo a temporal punishment. "Hence he, "who does penance, ought to offer himself to endure, and to be "chastised by God, in this life, that he may avoid eternal punish-"ment*." St. *Augustine* begged of God, that he would be pleased to chastise him in this world, so that he would pardon him in the next. "Here burn, here cut; so that thou spare hereafter."

*Penance as a sacrament.*

As these three acts compose the virtue of penance, they also make up the parts of the sacrament, which *Jesus Christ* has instituted upon this virtue. The words of this institution are these, spoke, to his Apostles on the day of his resurrection: *Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them: and whose* sins *you shall retain, they are retained* †.

By these words he has given power to the Apostles and their successors to remit and to retain the sins of the faithful; and by a necessary consequence he obliged the faithful, who should fall into sin, to put themselves in a state fit to receive that remission, and to have those dispositions without which a sin cannot be pardoned either by God or men, which are *confession*, *contrition*, and *satisfaction*. *Confession*, by which the delinquents declare their sins to him who has power to judge, to wit, the priest; because a judge cannot pass sentence upon a crime, if he know it not, or it be not brought before him to judge; *contrition*, because a sin cannot be remitted to him who does not declare his sorrow before the judge: and *satisfaction*, because to receive a remission, one must be disposed to receive it upon the conditions that shall please him who gives it, and with that reasonable chastisement that he shall think proper to impose. So these three acts, serving as dispositions for the remission of sin, serve also for the matter of the judgment, which the priest makes of the same sin, and of the absolution he pronounces by virtue of the power which *Jesus Christ* has given him.

These two things joined together, *viz.* the acts of the penitent and the absolution of the priest, constitute the sacrament which we call penance; whereof these acts are the matter, and absolution the form, which are the two parts necessary for a sacrament.

Behold, *Theotime*, what penance is. It is necessary that you should preserve in your mind this idea, and the distinction now made, as the ground-work of all we shall say on this subject: because to effect the true conversion, of which we are here speaking, penance

* S. Ambros. in Psalm xxxvii. † Joh. xx. 22, 23.

penance is requiſite both as a virtue, and as a ſacrament. The ſacrament is neceſſary, becauſe by it we receive the forgiveneſs of our ſins. The acts of this ſame virtue are likewiſe neceſſary before the ſacrament, to diſpoſe one to receive it; and after having received it, to ſatisfy God, and preſerve one's ſelf in grace.

## CHAP. III.

### *What contrition is.*

IN treating of the acts or parts of penance, I begin with contrition, as being the moſt neceſſary; for without it the others are of no value, and it may ſupply their want in caſe of neceſſity, on condition that it include the will to confeſs, and ſatisfy when we are able. Wherefore read attentively what follows.

The council of *Trent* gives us a perfect idea of this great action, when it defines it to be "A grief of mind, and a deteſtation of ſin "committed, accompanied with a reſolution "not to commit it any more*." *Contrition defined.*

It is *a grief of mind*, that is, a regret and interior diſpleaſure, which is conceived in the heart for having offended God. And *a deteſtation*, by which word is meant a hatred and an averſion which one has to ſin, in looking on it as a wicked thing, and as the mortal enemy to our ſalvation and the glory of God. *With a reſolution not to ſin any more.* This is a neceſſary conſequence of the grief and hatred of ſin. For he who has a regret for an evil, and truly deteſts it, has alſo a will to avoid it; if he has not this will, it is certain he has neither ſorrow nor averſion.

By this definition you ſee that *contrition* is compoſed of three interior acts, a ſorrow, a deteſtation, and a good purpoſe. Deteſtation is the firſt act and the ground-work, on which are raiſed the other two. For he who conceives in his heart a hatred againſt ſin, has a ſorrow for having committed it, and a purpoſe not to commit it any more. So that we muſt chiefly apply ourſelves to form this deteſtation of ſin. *Contrition contains three acts.*

That we may arrive at this, we muſt underſtand the malice of ſin: for we only hate and deteſt thoſe things we know to be evil.

There

* Con. Trid. Seſſ. 14. c. 4.

*Two evils in sin.*

There are in sin two evils, the evil of the *fault*, and the evil of the *punishment*. The first is the *injury*, which by sin is done to God. The other is the *hurt*, which the same sin draws upon us in punishment of the injury done to God. The one regards God, the other our salvation: both of them render sin infinitely detestable. The evil of the *fault*, because it offends God, and the evil of the *pain*, by the mischief it brings upon us, the loss of God's grace, and the incurring of eternal damnation.

Indeed, *Theotime*, can any thing be more detestable, or create in us a greater horror, than the cause which produces these two evils? Sin offends God so highly, and is such an injury done to him, that men and Angels together are not able to comprehend how heinous it is. Is there any evil more heinous and detestable? By the injury it does to God, it separates us from him, causes us to lose his grace, excludes us for ever from his glory, and renders us obnoxious to everlasting misery: can we speak, or think of an evil more dreadful, and which deserves more our hatred and detestation?

Let us go farther, and consider sin not only in general, and as it is in others; but as it is within ourselves, and say to our own hearts, by sin I have offended my creator, my redeemer, my benefactor, my all: a God, infinite in greatness, in goodness, in holiness; without cause, without reason; only through my malice and blindness: why then have I not a horror of myself, and of the evils I have done?

By the same sins I have lost the grace of God, I am become his enemy, I am deprived of heaven, I am fallen into the slavery of the Devil, and made a victim of hell. O sin, how horrid art thou! O sin, why have I committed thee! O sin, I hate and detest thee with all my heart, and above any thing that is detestable in the world. *I have hated and abhorred iniquity* *.

## CHAP. IV.

*Of the qualities, or conditions, which true contrition ought to have.*

WE speak not here of perfect *contrition* (whereof we shall treat in the following chapter) but more generally of the conditions which grief, necessary for obtaining the remission of sin, ought to have, whether it be perfect, or imperfect; and I say this

* Ps. cxviii. 163.

this *contrition* must have four qualities, it must be *interior*, *supernatural*, *universal*, and *sovereign:* take notice of these qualities, for they are of great importance, and many are deceived herein.

1. *Contrition*, or sorrow for sin, ought to be *interior*, that is to say, from the heart; when it is only in words and outward appearance, it is not *contrition*, but an illusion: the heart must sincerely produce the sentiment and sorrow which the words express: for this reason the council said above, that it was *a sorrow of mind*, and a detestation of sin: now this detestation is an act of the will. The scripture says, that it is a conversion, that is, a return of the heart to God: *Be converted to me with all your heart**. That we must seek God by penance, and in seeking we shall find him; *Yet so, if thou seek him with all thy heart, and all the affliction of thy soul*†. God rejects the repentance of the *Jews*, who rent their garments, as exterior demonstrations of their sorrow, which never reached the heart. *Be converted to me*, said God to them, *with all your heart, in fasting, and in weeping, and in mourning. And rend your hearts, and not your garments*‡. *First quality.*

Indeed there is nothing more manifest both from scripture and reason, than that repentance ought to be in the heart, that is, in the will: that as the will was the cause of sin, so also it may be the cause of sorrow, and produce repentance. The heart must revoke the evil, which it has wilfully committed, and detest sin, which was formerly the object of its affection.

2. It is not sufficient to detest sin in the heart; it must also be detested upon a good motive, that is, upon a motive sufficient to obtain pardon for the sin. This motive, that it may produce that effect, must be *supernatural*, that is, one of those which God has revealed, and which we know by faith: because an action purely natural cannot deserve the sanctification of the soul, which is wrought by grace, and is a thing above nature. Hence we assigned the second quality of *contrition* to be supernatural, that is, conceived upon a supernatural motive, and consequently by a motion inspired by God. *Second quality.*

These supernatural motives have relation to two heads, *viz.* to that which concerns our supernatural good, which is eternal happiness; and to that which regards the glory of God. I say, our supernatural good; because the natural goods, as life, health, honour,



* Joel ii. 12. † Duet. iv. 29. ‡ Joel. ii. 12, 13.

honour, riches, are not able to raiſe ſuch a ſorrow for ſin, as will obtain pardon from God. This we muſt take notice of: ſuch was the ſorrow of *Saul*, who did not grieve for his ſin, but for the loſs of his kingdom, which he ſaw God would deprive him of. Such was the ſorrow of *Antiochus*, who did not weep for his crimes, but the great misfortunes with which he found himſelf overwhelmed. Such many times is the grief of Chriſtians who crave pardon for their ſins, when they are ſurrounded with afflictions, that affect them more ſenſibly than the evil they have committed by their ſins, which moves them little or nothing. It is very true, that afflictions make us return to God, and he ſends them for that effect: but there is a great deal of difference between the occaſion which makes us do an action, and the motive for which it is performed. Afflictions ſerve as an occaſion to return to God, becauſe they awake us from the ſleep of ſin, make us enter into ourſelves, be ſorry for the crimes that cauſed them, and have recourſe to God for our deliverance: but they ought not to ſerve as a motive to deteſt our ſins; becauſe that would be only a pure natural ſorrow, which avails nothing towards reſtoring us to the grace of God. We muſt have a nobler motive, and returning to God by afflictions, deteſt our ſins, by reaſon of the danger to which they expoſed our eternal ſalvation; or, which is a better motive, becauſe they have infinitely offended the honour of God.

*Third quality.*

3. We have ſaid, that *contrition* muſt not be only ſupernatural, but alſo *ſovereign*, that is, it does not ſuffice to deteſt ſin upon a ſupernatural motive, but this motive ſhould ſurpaſs all others that come into our mind, and hold the chief place: ſo that we ſhould rather deteſt ſin, by reaſon of the damage it brings to our ſalvation, or the injury done to God, than for any natural evils it may produce, and be reſolved to ſuffer them all, rather than commit one mortal ſin.

Becauſe ſin is the ſovereign and the greateſt of all evils. For if we conſider the offence, there is none more heinous; and if we conſider the puniſhment, there is none more dreadful. This is the reaſon why we cannot deteſt it ſufficiently, but by deteſting it above all natural misfortunes.

*Remark.*

Herein yet we muſt mark well, that this greater deteſtation does not conſiſt in being more ſenſible, more lively, or more vehement than

than the hate and deteſtation of other evils, becauſe that is not neceſſary, nor always in our power: but this is to be underſtood of the notion or judgment which we make of ſin, accounting it really the greateſt of all evils, as in effect it is, and deteſting it in this view above all others, and purpoſing firmly not to commit it any more upon any account whatſoever.

We are yet to obſerve, that to have that deteſtation of ſin above all evils in our heart, it is not at all neceſſary that every evil in particular ſhould be conſidered, as death, torments, infamy, and the like; but it ſuffices that they ſhould be propoſed in general Indeed it is not adviſable to propoſe them ſeparately, leſt their repreſentation ſhould make the mind either to waver in its reſolutions, or to make them with ſuch raſhneſs and preſumption, as would be forgotten on the firſt ariſing temptation, as it happened to St. *Peter*. It is ſufficient to think ſin the greateſt of all evils which can ever befal us; to hate and deteſt it, as ſuch; to make a reſolution not to commit it any more, whatever misfortune may happen to us; truſting in the mercy of God, and hoping he will either free us from thoſe miſchiefs, or that he will give us ſtrength to ſupport them by his grace, rather than offend him. *Obſerve.*

4. The fourth quality of *contrition* is, that it muſt be univerſal in reſpect of all mortal ſins, that is, we muſt deteſt all, without excepting any, with a reſolution never more to commit any one mortal ſin. The Holy Ghoſt pointed out this quality, when he ſaid, that we muſt do penance for all the ſins we have committed. *If the wicked do penance for all his ſins, living he ſhall live and ſhall not die* *. We muſt convert ourſelves to God with all our hearts, that is, the heart muſt be wholly offered to God, and not divided, ſo as to give one part to God, and the other to ſin. *Their heart*, ſays he elſewhere, *is divided, now they ſhall periſh* †. The reaſon is evident, becauſe mortal ſins cannot be remitted but all together, ſince man cannot reſerve in his heart an affection to any one mortal ſin, but he will of neceſſity incur the hatred and diſpleaſure of God. The *contrition* therefore, which one may think he has for other ſins, cannot juſtify him in the ſight of God, as it is falſe and imaginary; becauſe if he really hates any, he hates all ſins, there not being any one which does not incur damnation, and infinitely offend God. *Fourth quality.*



* Ezech. xviii. 21. † Oſ. x. 2.

Hence it is, that those deceive themselves who pretend to repentance, and yet refuse to pardon injuries, or to be reconciled to their enemies; those also who will not restore the goods they have unjustly gotten, and those who persist in the immediate occasions of sin, and such like: in a word, all those who have any wilful attachment to any particular mortal sin, which yet they are not fully resolved to break, are not true penitents.

## CHAP. V.

### *Of perfect and imperfect contrition.*

THIS distinction is grounded upon what we said above of the two sorts of evils which are found in sin, to wit, the injury done to God, and the damage brought on our own souls.

When we hate sin, by reason of the supernatural goods which it deprives us of, as the grace of God and eternal life; or because of the punishment it draws upon us from Almighty God, it is an act of *contrition*, but an imperfect one, because we consider nothing but our own interest; and this act is called *attrition*.

But when besides this motive we raise our thoughts higher, and hate sin as being an affront to the supreme goodness of God, who deserves to be loved above all things, even more than ourselves, and whom we are obliged to love, although there were neither a heaven nor a hell; it is an act of perfect *contrition*, which proceeds from *charity*, and the pure *love of God*.

In either kind of contrition, there is a *fear* and *love* of God, but differently. For in *attrition* there is a servile fear, dreading punishment; and an imperfect love, which makes us only regard God as the author of our salvation, and love him for our own advantage. In *contrition* there is a filial fear, and a perfect love or charity; which makes us more concerned for the honour of God than our own welfare.

By the one and the other we hate sin; but by the first we hate principally the punishment of sin, and fear that more than the fault, or offence of God. By the second we detest principally the offence of God, and fear that more than the punishment.

*Remark.* But here we must take notice of a point of great concern: when we say, that in *attrition* we fear *more* the pain than the offence; this

*more*,

*more*, or this exceſs, is not to be underſtood of a poſitive preference or eſteem, by comparing the puniſhment with the offence. For he who, weighing theſe two together, ſhould ſay, either expreſly or tacitly, that he fears *more* to be damned than to offend God, would commit a mortal ſin; but this is to be underſtood only of, as we may call it, a negative, or abſtractive preference; as for inſtance, when one thinks of the puniſhment of ſin, without reflecting on the offence of God, which occurs not to his mind; and, not thinking of it, he ſtops as it were only at the puniſhment which occurs, as being more ſenſible, and conceives a horror of ſin, and deteſts it upon that account, without riſing higher, or thinking of the offence.

But if it chance that any one think expreſly both of the *puniſhment* of ſin, and the *injury* which thereby is done to God, comparing the one with the other; ſuch a perſon would be obliged to deteſt them both, according to their merits, that is, the offence more than the puniſhment. I ſay *more*, not as to the greatneſs, or vehemency of the fear and deteſtation, but as to the preference which the will conceives of the one above the other, that is, deteſting the offence more than the puniſhment.

In practice, *Theotime*, we ſhould always endeavour to have them both; for to content ourſelves only with imperfect *contrition*, is the part of a mean ſpirit, and a token of a ſervile and mercenary ſoul; beſides it would be apt to raiſe doubts of conſcience; becauſe it muſt be very difficult to confine one's ſelf to an imperfect *contrition*, grounded only on a motive of fear, without openly preferring our own intereſt to that of God, and our ſalvation to his glory. On the other ſide, an act of perfect *contrition* is an act of the higheſt perfection, and to perform it is a very difficult thing; it is not uſual, neither can we, ordinarily ſpeaking, aſcend at one ſtep to the higheſt and moſt perfect acts of a virtue: wherefore we muſt begin with thoſe of the lower rank, and by them mount up to thoſe of an higher claſs; as nature herſelf teacheth us in all her productions. But obſerve, it frequently happens, that we are deceived on this occaſion; for many are perſuaded that they have perfect *contrition*, as ſoon as they have pronounced theſe words, *I deteſt my ſins, becauſe God is infinitely good.* But there is a great difference between ſaying theſe words, and conceiving in our heart their true ſenſe. *Practice.*

First then, *Theotime*, begin with imperfect *contrition*; and after having considered the great and dreadful mischiefs which are the effects of sin, as the loss of the grace of God, the loss of heaven, and the incurring of eternal damnation, proceed to hate and detest it with all your heart, as our most mortal enemy; and love God as the author of your justification, who is able to deliver you from such a wretched state, and restore to you what you have lost. Next raising your mind, and considering that sin must needs be a horrible evil in itself, and strangely offensive to the divine bounty, since he punishes it with so much rigour, go on to the hatred of sin itself, by reason of the injury it does to God: An injury which derives its enormity from the supreme, the infinite bounty, sanctity, and majesty of God, whom it infinitely offends, and consequently becomes infinitely detestable, and which ought to be hated and detested with a supreme, and, if possible, infinite hatred, although there were neither a heaven it could deprive us of, nor a hell to punish it. See more of this Chap. XII.

## CHAP. VI.

### *Of the means to obtain contrition.*

IF it were the same thing to have *contrition*, as to know it, there would be nothing more required, than what we have said, to attain it. But it is far otherwise, *Theotime*. This great and important action is not so easy as they imagine, who believe they have power to produce it every moment. It is a fruit which comes from heaven; it is a plant which our earth, now become dry and barren through sin, cannot bring forth, except it be watered from above, and prepared by the blessing or grace of God. *The Lord*, says the Prophet, *will give goodness: and our earth*, that is, our hearts, *shall yield her fruit**.

*Contrition is an inspiration of God.*

It is not so easy to clear one's self of sin, as to fall into it. A man may quickly cast himself into a deep pit by his own fault; but he cannot get out without trouble, and the assistance of another. We sin by our own free will alone, but by this alone we cannot free ourselves from sin, unless the grace of God withdraw us from it. *Destruction is thy own, O Israel: thy help is only in me*†. This is an article of faith which has always been believed

* Psalm lxxxiv. 13. † Os. xiii. 9.

believed in the church, and which the council of *Trent* has defined anew. "If any one says, that without the preventing inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and his succour, a man can believe, hope, love, or be sorry for his sins, as is necessary to receive justifying grace, let him be anathematized*."

With what fear and trembling ought not those souls to be seized, whose conscience tells them, that they are in the unfortunate state of mortal sin? When they reflect that their salvation depends upon God alone, and that they cannot of themselves escape the danger they are in, except they be withdrawn by his hand, whom they have so grievously offended, and who is their professed enemy, while they continue in that state?

What ought still to encrease their fear, is, that there is nothing due to them from God, as long as they remain his enemies by sin, that he is not obliged to relieve them, having never promised it to any one; but that he may most justly leave them in that condition; because as St. *Augustine* says, "God who has promised pardon to him that shall do penance, has not promised penance to any one." What reasons then for fear and trembling, to see one's self in so deplorable a state, wherein he may be justly abandoned by God, and left a prey to the enemies of his salvation! What ought he to do, who considers himself in this danger? Or rather, what ought he not to do, to prevent the misfortunes which environ him at present, and avoid the eternal loss of his soul, which threatens him hereafter? He should certainly seek all means possible of appeasing God, and regaining his favour, which cannot be otherwise effected, than by ceasing to offend him, by performing acts of condign penance, and by pouring forth his soul in prayer, that he may obtain the grace of holy *contrition*.

In putting these methods in practice he should apply himself to consider the evil he has committed, meditate upon such motives as will imprint in his soul an horror of sin; then propose to himself the examples of true penitents, imitate them in their repentance, and conquer heaven by the force of tears and *contrition*, as they have done.



* Conc. Trid. Sess. 6. Canon. 3.

## CHAP. VII.

*Of the means to obtain contrition, which are, avoiding sin, doing works of penance, and prayer.*

I Join these three means together, because they are so inseparable, that they seem to make but one.

*First, avoid sin.* The first is to cease from offending God; for how can you expect from him the spirit of *contrition*, or the holy virtue of penance, whilst you persist actually in offending him, and resisting his grace? or how can you conceive a true sorrow and detestation of sin, in your heart, when you take pleasure in committing it? Sin banishes all pious thoughts and holy inspirations, and disperses and renders fruitless the rains of those heavenly graces, which God mercifully showers down upon men, even whilst they are his enemies, as a blasting north wind, by its cold and dryness, scatters the clouds, disperses the rain, and parches up the earth. *The north wind driveth away rain**. As on the contrary, the fear of God's judgments, which seizes upon sinners, is like the favourable south wind, which gathers the clouds, and pours rain upon the earth: this fear breathes into the soul the thoughts of repentance; it moves us to conceive a true sorrow for our sins, and *perfect contrition*.

*Secondly, do penance.* The second means is the practice of self-denial, and a general mortification. Next to sin, there is nothing more opposite to *contrition*, (which is the fruit of sorrow) than a life of pleasure. *Contrition* is not found but in grief and affliction, of which the heart, diverted by pleasure, is incapable. *Job*, speaking of wisdom, says, it is not found *in the houses of them that live in delight*†. Much less can *contrition*, which is the beginning of wisdom, and the fruit of an afflicted heart ruminating on sin in the bitterness of soul, be found amongst divertisements and pleasures. Wherefore he who resolves to be penitent and contrite, ought to banish far from his thoughts, diversions and pleasures. This is properly the work of penance, which must be accompanied with fasting and alms-deeds.

*Thirdly, pray.* The third necessary means is *Prayer*, because *contrition* is a gift of God, which is not due to us, but proceeds from his pure bounty; we have, therefore, great need to beg it of him very earnestly, acknow-

* Prov. xxv. 23. † Job xxviii. 13.

knowledging our own misery and the absolute dependence we have upon his mercy. Here we must enter into and humble ourselves before God, from a conviction of that wretchedness to which sin has exposed us in the prayer of the Prophet *Jeremias:* I am *the man that see my poverty by the rod of his indignation**. It is true, O my God, I acknowledge the extreme misery, to which thy anger has justly reduced me. I am now in the darkness of sin, instead of the light of thy grace, which I formerly enjoyed. Thou hast turned thy hand against me; thou has taken away all my strength, and overwhelmed me with bitterness and affliction; my life is fallen into an abyss, out of which I cannot escape. Considering myself in this state, I said, I was lost: but I had recourse to thee, O my God, I invoked thy holy name from the depth of my misery. Thou hast graciously hearkened to me. Do not turn away thine ears from the sighs which flow from my heart, from the cries which I make to obtain thy mercy.

## CHAP. VIII.

*Of the motives of contrition, and first of the grievousness of sin.*

WHEN you implore *contrition* of God by prayer, and works of penance, you must endeavour on your part to weigh attentively the motives, which are capable of raising this sorrow in your heart, and to meditate upon the grievousness of sin, and the reasons which may move you to an horror and detestation of it. This method is absolutely necessary for him, who desires to be truly converted; though it be little practised, as God himself complains: *There is none*, says he, *that doth penance for his sin, saying: What have I done*†?

Do you it at least, as you ought, dear *Theotime*, and with all the attention of your heart, whilst you read what I shall here propose concerning the grievousness of sin, and beg of God, that he will make you comprehend this so important a subject, which without his grace you will never rightly understand.

*The grievousness of sin incomprehensible.*

You must then suppose, that the grievousness of sin is so great, that it is incomprehensible; this truth alone may make you judge of the greatness of it. To comprehend this grievousness, you should have a true definition of sin, perfectly explaining its nature; but this is impossible. The sovereign good, which

* Lament. iii. 1. † Jer. viii. 6.

which is God, cannot be defined, becauſe it is infinite; neither can ſin, which is the ſovereign evil. God is infinite in goodneſs; ſin is infinite in malice: God poſſeſſes all perfections; ſin contains all wickedneſs No created ſpirit can comprehend the greatneſs, goodneſs and perfections of God; ſo none but God can underſtand the grievouſneſs, malice, and evils found in ſin.

The reaſon is very evident, becauſe to underſtand well the grievouſneſs of ſin, and the injury it does to God, we muſt know how great, how holy, how good, how perfect God is, in as much as ſin derives its enormity from the oppoſition it has to the greatneſs, goodneſs, and holineſs of God. To know the greatneſs of an offence, we muſt know the greatneſs and dignity of the perſon offended. For this reaſon, to comprehend the grievouſneſs of ſin and the injury it does to God, we muſt meaſure the greatneſs of God; but where is the meaſure of this height of all perfection? We can never find it, ſo neither can we fathom the abyſs of ſin. *Who hath meaſured*, ſaith *Eccleſiaſticus*, *the height of heaven, and the depth of the abyſs*?* Much leſs can the greatneſs of God and the grievouſneſs of ſin be meaſured. If God be ſo high in dignity and majeſty, that no created ſpirit can reach him, ſin is ſo deep in malice and unworthineſs, that it is impoſſible to comprehend it.

We muſt not deſpair of producing an act of *contrition*, although we cannot fully conceive the grievouſneſs of ſin. For in ſaying we cannot comprehend its grievouſneſs, there is the ſtrongeſt reaſon for abhorring it, and lamenting if we be ſo unfortunate as to fall into it. Sin then is ſo great an evil, that no created ſpirit can fully conceive its enormity; that to underſtand it, we muſt know God clearly face to face, ſince only God himſelf can fully comprehend it. What horror, what deteſtation ought we not to have for ſo great an evil? and what ſorrow ought we to have, to ſee ourſelves, by our own rebellious will, become guilty of it?

Ponder this well, *Theotime*, paſs it not over in haſte, for it is very moving. I ſay again, there is nothing that can make us hate ſin more than to know that we cannot comprehend its grievouſneſs; it is eaſy to prove this by a contrary but very evident reaſon, *viz.* that there is nothing more powerful to raiſe in us a love and reſpect towards God, than when we are fully perſuaded, that he is ſo great, ſo perfect, and ſo amiable, that his greatneſs and perfections do infinitely ſurpaſs all that we can conceive of him. Let us apply the ſame to the grievouſneſs of ſin, and the evils which it

* Eccli. i. 2.

it includes, and we shall find how detestable it is. O sin! Is it true then that thou art so great, that I cannot comprehend the heinousness of the injury thou dost to God? and not only I, but all men and angels together? If thy enormity be so prodigious, how can I but hate thee? Is not this sufficient to move me to a horror of thee, to know thou infinitely offendest a divine majesty? O monster of wickedness! he must needs be blind who is fond of thee; O abyss of misfortune! how ought I to fear, lest I should fall into thy precipices!

## CHAP. IX.

*Continuation of the same subject, the grievousness of sin.*

LET us however attempt to gather some knowledge at least of the grievousness of mortal sin; and although we cannot comprehend it, as it is in itself, let us learn what the Holy Ghost has been pleased to let us know by the sacred scripture. Read, *Theotime*, and be attentive.

### *What is sin?*

It is a rebellion of the creature against his Creator; a resistance against his commandments, by which it refuses to obey him, and be subject to his holy will. This is what we learn from that bitter reproach, which God makes to sinners by *Jeremias*. *Of old time thou hast broken my yoke, thou hast burst my bands*, (that is, all the considerations which kept thee tied to my service) *and thou saidst: I will not serve* *. Behold what sin is, and what you have committed, as often as you have mortally offended God. Consider well this definition; but this is not all.

### *What is sin?*

It is a base ingratitude committed against God, and a forgetfulness of all his favours. Who is it that says this? it is he himself by his prophet. *I have brought up children, and exalted them: but they have despised me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel hath not known me, and my people hath not understood* †. And in another place, *The beloved grew fat*, (that is, he hath enjoyed abundantly the goods which I have sent him) *and kicked:*

* Jer. ii. 20. † Is. i. 2, 3.

*kicked: he forsook God who made him, and departed from God his Saviour* *.

*What is sin?*

It is a contempt of God, and his commandments, by which one openly disregards his greatness, power, promises, or threats. *I have brought up children, but they have despised me* †. By another prophet he complains, *As a woman that despiseth her lover, so hath the house of Israel despised me* ‡. By another he says, *She hath despised my judgments, so as to be more wicked than the Gentiles; and my commandments, more than the countries that are round about her. For they have cast off my judgment, and have not walked in my commandments* §. And by another prophet he reproaches sinners with their contempt: *The son honoureth the father, and the servant his master; if then I be a father, where is my honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear* ¶?

*What is sin?*

It is an injury done to God in his own person, and before his face, without respect to his greatness and sanctity. *What is the meaning that my beloved hath wrought much wickedness in my house* ‖? *For Jerusalem is ruined, and Juda is fallen: because their tongue, and their devices are against the Lord, to provoke the eyes of his majesty* **.

*What is sin?*

It is a revolting from God, and a renouncing of his friendship and grace, to follow one's own will, passions, pleasure, interest, and the like. For this reason divines, after a serious consideration of the nature of sin, have thought, that they could not explain it better, than by saying it was *a turning away from God, and a turning to the creature.* Behold, what is done by sin! Hearken to the judgment and complaint of God himself. *Be astonished,* says he, *O ye heavens at this, and ye gates thereof be very desolate. For my people have done two evils. They have forsaken me the fountain of living water* (that is, the source of all good) *and have digged to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water* ††. The meaning is, that he who sins, seeks his good and happiness in creatures, where he shall never find it. What greater blindness than this? See what

* Deut. xxxii. 15. † Is. i. 2. ‡ Jer. iii. 20. § Ezech. v. 6. ¶ Mat. i. 6. ‖ Jer. xi. 15. ** Isai. iii. 8. †† Jer. ii. 12. 13.

what they do, who offend God mortally; it is in this preference which we give the creature before God himſelf, wherein the grievouſneſs of mortal ſin conſiſts. For as the love of God above all things conſiſts in preferring him above all, that is, before one's own will, paſſions, pleaſures, honour, and intereſt: ſo mortal ſin, which is directly oppoſite to charity, conſiſts in preferring all theſe things, or any of them before God, and chooſing rather to loſe the friendſhip of God, than deprive one's ſelf of theſe deceitful goods which he has forbidden. And he who reſolves to commit a mortal ſin, in effect places on one ſide the greatneſs of God, his favours, his promiſes, and menaces; and on the other ſide his own paſſions, pleaſures, honours, or riches: and having compared theſe, ſo oppoſite objects together, ſays within himſelf; I make more account of theſe imaginary goods, than of the greatneſs of God, his friendſhip, his promiſes, and threats; all which, I renounce to gratify my paſſions, my pleaſure, my ambition, my avarice, *&c.* Conſider this well, *Theotime*, that you may comprehend ſomething of the grievouſneſs of ſin, and the miſchief you have brought on yourſelf, when you were ſo blind as to fall into it.

## CHAP. X.

### *Another demonſtration of the grievouſneſs of ſin.*

WHAT has been ſaid is more than enough to form a judgment of the heinouſneſs of mortal ſin; but becauſe the more we ſink into the matter, the more copious is the ſubject. Behold yet one more conſideration to diſcover its enormity.

Sin is a reſiſtance againſt the divine will, or, as St. *Ambroſe* has very well defined it, "it is a ſwerving from the law of God, and a "diſobedience to his divine commandments." This diſobedience offends God, and injures him ſo as to violate the right which God has to be obeyed and loved by his creatures. It is alſo neceſſarily accompanied with all thoſe indignities, which we have ſaid above are found in ſin, *viz.* rebellion againſt God, ingratitude, contempt, an inſult offered to his adorable preſence, and a preference of the creature before God, a renouncing of his friendſhip, and many other indignities: all which aggravating circumſtances demonſtrate the greatneſs of the injury done to God.

And

*The evil of sin proportionable to the greatness of God.*

And since this vile and base injury is offered to a person the most eminent and of the highest dignity, whose authority is boundless, and infinitely raised above all that is great: hence it is, that this affront infinitely surpasses all the abuses and wrongs that can be offered to man; it being a certain rule in morality that an offence derives its enormity from the greatness of the person that is offended. Thus an affront offered to a prince is more heinous than that offered to one of base condition. Now God being infinite in greatness and majesty, an injury offered to him is also boundless in its malice and infinite, because the person offended is infinite.

Sum up all these aggravations together; an infinite offence committed against the infinite greatness of God, accompanied with rebellion, ingratitude, contempt of God and his friendship, and infidelity; then judge what we ought to say of the greatness of the injury sin offers to God; especially when we consider it committed by a wretched creature, a miserable servant, a worm of the earth, which in the sight of God is less than nothing; judge then, I say, if you can, of the greatness of the injury; but you can never arrive at a perfect apprehension of it, although all the knowledge of both men and Angels were centered in your soul.

Sin is an affront so great, that it made St. *Austin*, and other Divines after him, say, that it were far better the whole frame of the world should perish, that is, heaven and earth, and all contained therein, than that we should commit any one mortal sin. "Sin (says that holy Doctor) is to dishonour God, which "a man ought not to do, although all things, except God, be "destroyed."

Sin is so high an insult, that it made St. *Anselm* say, that "If "he should see on one side hell open with all its flames; and on the "other side, one mortal sin to be committed; and that he were "forced to make choice, he would rather choose to cast himself "into hell, than sin mortally *." And he adds the reason. "Because, (says he) I would rather descend into hell innocent "and without sin, than enjoy heaven, whilst defiled with sin; "for it is most certain, that only the wicked are tormented in "hell, and only the just are blessed in heaven." Although this necessity of choice can never happen; yet the supposition, which this great Saint makes, manifestly shews the grievousness of mortal sin,

* St. Anselm de similitudinibus, c. 190.

sin, and the injury which by it is done to God: and it is grounded upon this undoubted truth, that the evil of the fault is infinitely greater, and more to be feared than the evil of the punishment.

Sin is so heinous an affront, that if all the men in the world, and all the Angels in heaven, should unite in deploring the injury offered to God by any one mortal sin, and attempting the reparation of his honour, their atonement would not be answerable to the injury that had been done to his infinite majesty.

Sin is an injury so great, that only God himself was able to repair it; and to perform this, it was necessary that God should reduce himself to a state in which he might satisfy, should humble himself so as to become man, and offer himself a sacrifice to the divine justice, the infinite value of which not only equalled, but far surpassed the grievousness of sin; two things were here wonderfully united, the divinity and humanity, "*this* to be offered, "and *that* to give infinite value and merit to the offering†."

In short sin is an injury so offensive and enormous, that the flames of hell, which it has enkindled, can neither make satisfaction through all eternity, nor appease the divine wrath against those sinners who had neglected to appease God by the merits of *that* divine sacrifice, and Christ's precious blood poured out by the Son of God to cleanse them from their sins, and purchase their pardon.

Weigh well all these considerations, *Theotime*, read them often, and endeavour, by frequent meditation, to imprint them in your mind.

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## CHAP. XI.

### *Of the dreadful effects of mortal sin.*

THE best way to know a cause, is to consider its effects, so the best means to discover the grievousness of mortal sin, is to reflect on the sad effects which follow from it. We have said before, that we cannot form a just idea of sin, which is an infinite evil, no more than we can of God, who is an infinite good: nevertheless as by the effects which we see of his power, of his wisdom, of his goodness, we arrive at some knowledge of God: so on the contrary, we may find out in some degree the heinousness of sin, if we do but consider attentively its dreadful effects.

All

* Euseb. Emis. hom. 6. de Pascha.

All theſe effects are ſo many powerful motives of *contrition*, to make us deteſt and abhor ſin. To diſcover them the better, we ſhall obſerve ſome order, and ſearch for them in ſeveral places, *viz.* in ourſelves, in heaven, in hell, in God himſelf, and in his Son *Jeſus Chriſt*.

## ARTICLE I.

### *The ſad effects of ſin in the ſoul.*

*Sin cauſes the death of the ſoul.*

I Begin with the death of the ſoul, becauſe this is the firſt effect which ſin produceth, as ſoon as it is committed. *Sin when it is compleated begetteth death* *. I wiſh that this death were as ſenſible as it is real, and that thoſe who are ſo unfortunate as to fall into mortal ſin, might as clearly diſcern the greatneſs of the evil which thereby they draw upon themſelves, as really it is enormous in itſelf.

Sin then (ſays the ſcripture) is no ſooner compleated, but immediately it cauſeth death, doubtleſs not of the body, for a man does not die in the moment he has committed it, but the death of the ſoul, a thouſand times more dreadful than that of the body; for this does but ſeparate the ſoul from the body: but the death which is cauſed by ſin is a ſeparation of the ſoul from God, its ſupernatural life. And as this life, which God gives the ſoul, is infinitely more eſtimable than that which the ſoul confers upon the body, by animating it: ſo the death which cauſes the loſs of that divine life, is infinitely more dreadful.

To underſtand this well, you muſt know what faith teaches us concerning a ſoul which has the bleſſing to be in a ſtate of grace. It is this; when God receives a ſoul into his friendſhip, he clothes her with the robe of ſanctifying grace, a ſupernatural and divine quality, which cleanſes the ſoul from all the ſpots of ſin, and renders her agreeable in the ſight of God. At the ſame moment he repleniſhes her with divine gifts, as faith, hope, charity, and other Chriſtian virtues: then by means of grace God dwells in the ſoul after a particular manner, he makes her his temple and habitation, where he is pleaſed to be adored and loved by the ſoul which poſſeſſes him, and interchangeably communicates himſelf unto her, filling her with his holy ſpirit and divine inſpirations.

* Jam. i. 15.

All

All theſe truths are drawn from the expreſs words of the ſacred ſcripture. *The Lord will pour upon you clean water, and you ſhall be cleanſed from all your filthineſs* *: This water is ſanctifying grace. *The charity of God is poured abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghoſt who is given to us* †. *Know you not that you are the temple of God, and the ſpirit of God dwelleth in you* ‡. *If any one love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and will make our abode with him* §. *God is charity; and he that abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God in him* ¶. A great number of the like paſſages, clearly repreſent to us the ſtate of the ſoul ſanctified by grace, and the great happineſs ſhe enjoys in that condition, wherein ſhe poſſeſſes God himſelf, and is poſſeſſed by him.

Now all this felicity is conſtant and permanent, as to what relates to God, *whoſe gifts are without repentance* ‖: the ſoul alone can deprive herſelf of this happineſs.

*Sin robs the ſoul of grace.*

This misfortune befals us, when, forgetful of the infinite bleſſing we poſſeſs, and permitting ourſelves to be ſurpriſed by the allurements of ſin, we break that happy alliance which God had made with us; and this by a criminal diſobedience, whereby we incur the diſpleaſure of God, and loſe in a moment all thoſe ineſtimable goods which before we happily enjoyed.

Who can ſufficiently expreſs the dreadful misfortune of a ſoul in mortal ſin and paint to the life the deplorable ſtate to which ſhe is then reduced? The ſoul in that very inſtant is deprived of the grace of God, and of one beautiful and as an angel in his ſight, becomes as hideous and hateful as a Devil. *How is the gold become dim, the fineſt colour is changed* **. Is there any ſubject, to which we may more fitly apply thoſe doleful words of *Jeremy?* How comes it to paſs that this ſoul ſhould be ſo defaced? what is become of that grace which made her more bright than gold? how is that divine beauty changed into ſo hideous a form?

This is an effect of the divine anger, which has juſtly filled that ſoul with cloudy darkneſs, which before had unjuſtly baniſhed the light of grace. But what is moſt to be lamented; that ſoul which formerly had the honour to be employed as the temple of God, now ſees herſelf rejected by him with horror and deteſtation, and the Holy Ghoſt abandoning her to be the dwelling place of the Devil. *The Lord hath caſt off his altar, he hath curſed his ſanctuary* ††.



* Ezech. xxxvi. 25. † Rom. v. 5. ‡ 1 Cor. iii. 16. § Joh. xiv. 23. ¶ 1 Joh. iv. 16. ‖ Rom. xi. 29. ** Lam. iv. 1. †† Lam. ii. 7.

Is there any misery to be compared to this of being deprived of God? O my God! how is it possible that men should esteem thee so little? If a man lose a perishable good, as a friend, or an estate, this he laments most grievously; we lose Thee, and are not at all concerned! can there be any thing either more unjust or more provoking? Is not that most exactly true, which St. *Austin* says upon this subject? "He seems not to have the bowels of Christian "charity, who laments a body from which the soul is departed; "and does not at all weep for a soul from which God is sepa- "rated."

That I may yet make you understand more sensibly the deplorable state of a soul fallen into the displeasure of God, and your own condition, if you are under that misfortune: I shall present here a moving description, which a holy author made in these words, addressed to a soul fallen into mortal sin, and to you yourself if you are in that unhappy state.

"Open thy eyes miserable soul," says this holy doctor, speaking to a soul fallen into mortal sin, "and see what you were, and what "you are, in what place you were, and where you are at present. "You were the spouse of the most high; you were the temple of "the living God; you were a vessel of election, the couch of the "eternal King, the throne of the true *Solomon*, the seat of wisdom; "you were sister to the Angels, and heir of heaven; and as often as "I say you were, you were; so often ought you to lament and weep, "when you consider your sudden change. Your soul, which was "the spouse of God, is become the adulteress of Satan; the tem- "ple of the Holy Ghost is changed into a den of thieves; the "vessel of election into a vessel of corruption; the bed of *Solomon* "into a dunghill of unclean beasts; the seat of wisdom into the "chair of infection; the sister of the Angels is become a com- "panion of the Devil; and she, who mounted like a dove even "unto heaven, creeps now upon the earth like a serpent. Bewail "then yourself, O miserable soul; bewail and lament, since "the heavens weep for you; since all the saints deplore your "misery; the tears of St. *Paul* are shed for you, because you have "sinned, and have not done penance for what you have commit- "ted."

These words, *Theotime*, are not to be read slightly; read them often, applying them to yourself with attention; and without doubt, if you are not totally obdurate, they will make great impression

preſſion on your heart, when you conſider attentively the unfortunate and deplorable ſtate your ſoul is reduced to by ſin.

## ARTICLE II.

### *Of the effects of ſin in heaven, and upon earth.*

IF you deſire other reaſons for hatred and horror againſt ſin, *Theotime*, raiſe your thoughts to heaven, and ſee the diſorders it cauſed there. This infernal fury has ſpared nothing; it has carried its rage even to the houſe of God, which it filled with confuſion; it baniſhed one part of the Angels thence, and ſhut the door to men, and to you yourſelf. Let us conſider theſe misfortunes one after another.

God in the beginning of the world created an innumerable multitude of celeſtial ſpirits of ſeveral orders and different perfections, with which he filled heaven, and compoſed his celeſtial court, for executing his will both in heaven, and on earth. His deſign was to repleniſh them all with the happineſs of the perfect poſſeſſion of the divinity: for this effect, beſides the natural perfections he endowed them with, he created them in his grace, and adorned them with all ſupernatural virtues; thus to afford them a means of diſpoſing themſelves for the glory prepared for them, and of meriting it by their actions, and the practice of thoſe ſame virtues.

When they were in this ſtate, behold, *Theotime*, what ſin did; when they were, as I ſaid, in this ſtate full of great hopes, upon the point of receiving the fruit of the grace and virtues which God had communicated to them, and of enjoying the perfect viſion of the divinity, which would have ſecured their happineſs for ever; behold, ſin ſteals into the minds of one part of them, overthrows their fair hopes, and occaſions a dreadful confuſion in the houſe of God. This was a miſchievous thought of pride, begun in one of the chief Angels, who permitting himſelf to be ſurpriſed by ſelf-love, and the brightneſs of his excellent beauty, aſpired to ſurpaſs all others to that degree, that he would in ſome things be like to God himſelf; demanding an authority equal with his in the government of all creatures, chooſing rather, as St. *Bernard* ſays, "to be ſeparated from God, than be ſubject "to him." *Lucifer* was followed in this extravagance by many other Angels, who, adhering to his pride, liſted themſelves, as it were, under his banner. As they perſiſted in this rebellion, God,

*Sin changed Angels into Devils.*

who cannot endure the guilt of sin, be it in whom it will, gives us upon occasion of this first disobedience, the manifest marks of the hatred he bears to that infernal monster. For by one act of his indignation, he banishes from his kingdom this rebellious Angel with all his followers, and casts them headlong from the height of heaven to the lowest abyss of hell. Thus that celestial spirit, who was, but the instant before he sinned, one of the most beautiful creatures of God, and as one may say, the master-piece of all his works, became by his sin an infernal dragon, a sworn and irreconcileable enemy both to God and man.

What is it that has caused this lamentable change? Sin alone: it was sin alone that God could not endure in his most perfect creatures. *The heavens*, as it is said in the book of *Job*, *are not pure in his sight*; and in his Angels he found wickedness* †. He found sin in heaven, and in the Angels themselves; yet he did not pardon them, but chained them in hell to be there tormented, thereby to manifest to all creatures his hatred to this horrible monster ‡.

*Sin banished man out of Paradise.*

If sin was so fatal to the Angels in heaven, it has not been less terrible to men upon earth: it had no sooner banished the former, but it presently shut the gates against the latter. This was when the first man, who being created in the grace of God, after he had received all possible assurance of his friendship both as to this world and to the next, forgetful of himself, broke the commandments of God in eating the forbidden fruit.

He had no sooner fallen into this offence, but the anger of God appeared against him, and banished him out of the earthly paradise, that garden of delight, where but a while before he had been placed. Both he and all his posterity were condemned to labour, to death, and to all the miseries we even now groan under, for that first transgression of the law of God.

*Sin shut the gates of heaven.*

What is yet more terrible, the gates of heaven, which till then were open, were immediately shut, as well against himself as against all his posterity, without the least hopes of his ever being able to re-enter those happy mansions, by any means he, either of himself, or any of his offspring of themselves could use. O sin, how dreadful art thou, and what a train of misfortunes dost thou draw after thee!

This

* Job xv. 15. † Job iv. 18. ‡ 2 Pet. ii. 4.

This misery and desolation continued four thousand years and more, during which time no man ever entered into heaven, not even the greatest saint, until the coming of the Son of God into the world, who by his death opened the gates of heaven so long shut. During that time, how many millions of souls were excluded for ever, and without recovery, from that celestial inheritance! This happened to all those who in that compass of time died in their sins, and without doing penance for them. But after the way was open to heaven by the merits of *Jesus Christ*, how many are there still that enter not at all! Hell is daily filled with millions of souls, and heaven continues in comparison like a desert. What is the reason? Sin and final impenitence. O, how well did the wise man say, *sin maketh nations miserable**. Is it possible, *Theotime*, that you should run so slightly over these fatal and dreadful effects of sin, that they should not move you in the least?

*Sin occasioned death, and other effects.*

I might here mention the innumerable calamities, the continual and daily effects of sin in the world. Death, which it introduced from the beginning; barrenness of the earth; the rebellion of brute creatures; the deluge which drowned the world near two thousand years after its creation; sickness, plagues and pestilence, war and famine, and all the miseries, as well public as private, which we see and daily feel, are so many dismal effects of sin, whether of that of our first parents, or of those which men continually commit. *Fire, hail, famine, and death, all these were created for vengeance*†. But I shall omit all these evils, although most dreadful, to come to others infinitely greater and more terrible, whereof those are but the fore-runners, according to that infallible testimony of the Son of God. *These things* are but *the beginning of sorrows* ‡.

## ARTICLE III.

### *Of the effects of sin in hell.*

LET us go down into the pit of hell, that so we may conceive a more lively apprehension of the enormity of mortal sin. We shall there see the frighful evils which this monster has occasioned: and from so many dreadful effects, frame a judgment of the malice of that cause which produced them: and there learn, first, to detest



* Prov. xiv. 34. † Eccli. xxxix. 35. ‡ Mark xiii. 8.

ſin, the author of ſo many evils; ſecondly, to conceive a wholſome fear of falling into that abyſs of miſery to which ſin expoſes us. "It is neceſſary that we deſcend into hell alive," that is, think ſeriouſly and often on it, "that we may eſcape falling into it "after death*."

Conſider then, *Theotime*, attentively what faith teaches us concerning hell; that it is an eternal fire, which God has prepared for the Devil and his apoſtate Angels, and with which he has alſo decreed to puniſh the ſins of men, who follow the rebellious example of thoſe ambitious ſpirits.

*The ſentence to be pronounced upon the ſinner, at the day of judgment.*

This we learn from that terrible ſentence which the Son of God ſhall pronounce at the day of judgment againſt the wicked: *Depart from me, you curſed, into everlaſting fire, which was prepared for the Devil and his Angels*†. Whereby we learn that the ſame puniſhment, which is prepared for the Devils, is alſo appointed for men, and that they ſhall be companions of thoſe wicked and damned ſpirits as they were their followers in their rebellion againſt God. By this we may ſee what mortal ſin is, which renders us obnoxious to the ſame puniſhment and damnation with the Devils. Ponder this well, *Theotime*, and behold what it is to be damned together with Devils, and as the Devils are damned; and how great that offence muſt neceſſarily be, which deſerves a puniſhment equal to that with which the Devils are tormented.

But what will that puniſhment be? I confeſs we are not able to comprehend; but the Son of God, by his infinite wiſdom, has ſummed it up in four words, that we may more eaſily conceive it; words which contain all the horror of hell: *Depart*, ſays he, *ye curſed, into everlaſting fire* ‡.

By theſe words are denoted the ſeparation from God, the curſe of God, fire, and eternity. Behold in four words what hell is, behold the puniſhment of mortal ſin! To be ſeparated from God, to be accurſed of God, to be condemned to fire, and that for ever. Who can think of theſe things, and not tremble with fear and horror? Stay ſome time here, *Theotime*. This is not a ſubject to be read in haſte: revive theſe thoughts often, and pauſe a while upon each of theſe frightful puniſhments.

To

* St. Bernard. † Mat. xxv. 41. ‡ Mat. xxv. 41.

To be ſepatated from God, the author and fountain of all good, whoſe protection is a bleſſing to all creatures, and who no ſooner turns away his face, but all things are in trouble and confuſion *.

To be curſed of God, that is, hated, rejected with indignation, abandoned to all poſſible miſchiefs, without relief, without comfort, without hope.

To be condemned to fire, that is, to the moſt inſupportable of all torments.

And this for all eternity, that is, without hopes of ever being delivered from it; ſo that neither a hundred years, nor a hundred thouſand years, nor a hundred thouſand millions of years, make up the leaſt part of that dreadful duration. The unfortunate damned ſhall be curſed by God for ever. They ſhall be doomed to the fire of hell, and that for ever. From that very moment that this final decree ſhall be pronounced againſt them, there will be no farther reſource, or hopes of relief. This will be a thunderbolt, which, if once it fall upon their guilty heads, will never be withdrawn. It will inceſſantly torture them, without ever giving them the leaſt repoſe. During all eternity they will continually hear the words of their condemnation: *Depart, ye curſed, into everlaſting fire.* O mighty God, how terrible art thou in thy judgments! Is not he ſtrangely blind, and ſtupidly inſenſible, who fears not to fall into thy hands at the hour of death? Who can live without an apprehenſion of that tremendous thunder of thy final judgment, which will hurl the damned into endleſs woe! *Thy arrows*, ſays the prophet, that is, the afflictions of this life, *paſs*; at leaſt they end with life: but that terrible judgment, which thou layeſt on the wicked, *the voice of thy thunder* is *in a wheel*, it ſhall never ceaſe †. From the moment that it ſhall iſſue from thy hands, it continually rolls over their heads, cruſhes them without ceaſing, and yet deſtroys them not.

## ARTICLE IV.

### *A continuation of the ſame ſubject.*

THIS ſubject is too extenſive, and important, to content ourſelves with the little that we have ſaid: Let us not leave it ſo ſoon, *Theotime*, let us, meditate again and again upon theſe four puniſhments of mortal ſin, that we may comprehend them well, dread them, and conceive a horror of the cauſe from whence they ariſe.



* Pſalm ciii. 28, 29. † Pſalm lxxvi. 18, 19.

*Sin cauſes a ſeparation from God.*

Firſt then, the damned ſhall be ſeparated from God, be caſt out of his ſight, never to ſee him any more, and be eternally deprived of the beatifical viſion, and of all the felicities included in it. In a moment they ſhall ſee themſelves excluded from all thoſe ineſtimable goods, which God has prepared for his faithful ſervants; which *eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive**. Then they will perfectly know what they have loſt, they will be continually afflicted with rage and deſpair, to ſee that they have loſt ſuch treaſures, without hopes of ever recovering them again. Then will the prophecy of *David* be fully accompliſhed, which ſays, *the wicked ſhall ſee* the bleſſings and favours which God has beſtowed upon the juſt, *and* finding himſelf deprived, *ſhall be angry, he ſhall gnaſh with his teeth and pine away, the deſire of the wicked ſhall periſh* †, and avail them nothing: for it is certain, that God will make the damned know the happineſs which they have loſt; this knowledge will be one of their greateſt puniſhments. But what gives the heavieſt aggravation to the unhappineſs of this ſtate, will be the knowledge of the cauſe, *viz.* ſin, which has involved them in this extreme miſery. They will ſee that there was no other cauſe of this dreadful aggregation of all imaginable evils than ſin, and the ſorrow, which they ſhall conceive for this loſs, will be ſo much more encreaſed, as they ſhall more clearly underſtand, that it was by their own fault that they are deprived of ſo great happineſs, by having preferred fleeting and deceitful pleaſures, before real and eternal bleſſings. From hence they ſhall be tortured with deſpairing rage and oppreſſed with unſpeakable grief. As long as God ſhall be God, they ſhall continually hear that prophecy, *He ſhall never ſee light* ‡: And thoſe words of the Angel in the *Apocalypſe*: *without are dogs, and unchaſte, and murderers, and ſervers of idols, and every one that loveth and maketh a lie* §. This is the miſerable ſtate to which thoſe accurſed of God ſhall be reduced, being ſeparated from him for evermore; and that by a juſt judgment of God, who will forget them in the other, who forget him in this life; "God will never ac-" knowledge them for his ſervants, who would never acknowledge " God for their Maſter. They ſhall die to this mortal life, to live " eternally to an everlaſting death ¶."

In

* 1 Cor ii. 9. † Pſalm cxi. 10. ‡ Pſalm xlviii. 20. § Apocalypſe xxii. 15. ¶ Euſeb. Emiſ. hom. 3. de Epiphania.

In the second place, the damned shall be accursed of God. What is it to be accursed? Do you understand well this word, *Theotime?* And do you not tremble, when you hear it? *Sin causes the curse of God.*

For to be cursed of God is not only to be out of his favour, to be loathed by him, which yet are dreadful evils; but it is to be detested of God in such manner, as to be rejected by him, and abandoned to all possible misfortunes. The curse of Almighty God is not like that of men; for this is but a desire, or imprecation of some evil, which one man wishes to another: and this does not always take effect, because men desire evils, which they are not able to inflict. But the curse of God is efficacious, it causes the evil which it threatens, puts it in execution, without any one being able to prevent it. *For who resisteth his will*?* If there be any resistance, it both encreases the curse, and the evil which the person accursed endures.

This opposition will augment the curse of the damned. Their wicked and rebellious wills shall eternally resist the will of God, and the will of God shall perpetually resist and confound theirs. "There "never will be any agreement, says St. *Bernard*, between those two "wills; because the one is just, right, and equitable; the other is "unjust, perverse and wicked; the one incessantly desires, the other "eternally hates the punishment of sin, from which however it shall "never be delivered. It will indeed continually employ the ut-"most endeavours to shun pain, but to no purpose: It will be in-"censed against its own torments, and against God himself. O "what a torture is this, could we but rightly understand it! Is "there any torment greater than that of the depraved will of the "damned, to be labouring and struggling in vain? What affliction "more painful than always to desire that which will never come "to pass, and continually to wish to be freed from that which "they shall perpetually endure? The damned shall continue during "all eternity without obtaining what he desires, and yet shall "everlastingly suffer the evils which he would not suffer. Who "will put all this in execution? It will be God, who is upright "and just†. And who for that reason can never agree with the "unjust and depraved will of the damned; but on the contrary "will perpetually resist it, and eternally confound it. A misfor-"tune which shall certainly befal all those, who shall set them-"selves

* Rom. ix. 19. † L. 5. de Considerat. c. 12.

" ſelves againſt that ſtrait rule; which knows not how to bend, " or yield to its contrary."

Such ſhall be the effect of the curſe of God upon the damned, from the firſt moment that it ſhall fall upon their heads. Does it not hence appear how dreadful damnation is? But this is not all:

*Sin cauſes the fire of hell.*

For in the third place, thoſe wretched and accurſed ſouls ſhall be caſt into the torment of fire, even into the fire of hell, which is the miniſter and inſtrument of divine juſtice, the fruit and iſſue of mortal ſin. *A fire*, ſays the Prophet, *ſhall go before him: and ſhall burn his enemies round about*. Thou ſhalt make them as an oven of fire in the time of thy anger: the Lord ſhall trouble them in his wrath, and fire ſhall devour them*†. That fire, of which the Lord ſays: *A fire is kindled in my wrath, and ſhall burn even to the loweſt hell*‡. That fire, " in compariſon whereof our elemen- " tary fire is but a painted fire," as St. *Auſtin* ſays. God has communicated to it an impetuoſity and violence, which ſurpaſſes every thing in this world. It burns not only bodies, but ſouls alſo and ſpirits by a wonderful virtue, which the divine juſtice grants it, in raiſing it above its nature, to be able to torment ſpiritual beings: This fire by another extraordinary quality burns all without either conſuming the ſubject upon which it acts, or ever ſpending its own ſubſtance. Our fire conſumes the things it burns, which when it has deſtroyed, ſpends itſelf for want of fuel: but the fire of hell is of a quite contrary nature, ever burning without conſuming, and ever tormenting without diminution or abatement. For this reaſon our Saviour calls it, *an unquenchable fire*§. " Be- " cauſe the fire of hell being created by God for the puniſhment " of ſin, it chaſtiſes the ſin, without deſtroying any part of the " miſerable ſubject upon which it acts¶."

O fire! is it poſſible that men ſhould fear thee ſo little! is it not a wonderful thing that ſo many words ſhould be neceſſary to raiſe in men a dread of thoſe ſcorching flames? We have a ſtrong and lively apprehenſion of that we feel here. If a ſmall ſpark fall but on our hands, it makes us cry out amain: if one were conſtrained to put his finger in the fire but for a quarter of an hour, it could not be endured, and yet the fear of the fire of hell makes not the leaſt impreſſion upon us! The prophet cries out to all: *Which of you can dwell with devouring fire? Which of you ſhall dwell with everlaſting*

* Pſalm xcvi. 3. † Pſalm xx. 10. ‡ Deut. xxxii. 22. § Mat. iii. 12. ¶ Euſeb. Emiſ. hom. 1. ad. Monachos.

*everlasting burnings**. Yet how very few endeavour to avoid those inexpressible torments, or the object that deserves them, which is sin: or think seriously of the means to escape them, which are penance, and a virtuous life. Let us weigh this well, *Theotime*, and not follow the throng of those blinded persons, who run thus headlong to their own ruin; and for want of thought and foresight, precipitate themselves into this infernal fire.

Now, for the better escaping this dreadful misfortune, let us consider its duration; which will not be for a day, or a year, or a hundred years, but for all eternity. *Into everlasting fire*, that is, this fire, and all the other torments of the damned, shall never end, they shall endure as long as God shall be God. Death, when all comforts fail, is at least a sure refuge for grief and pain in this life: but in hell we shall not have this satisfaction; death there is inexorable: it is always present and always absent. The damned see it continually, and yet it always flies from them. *Men shall seek death, and shall not find it: and they shall desire to die, and death shall fly from them*†. What more frightful state than that of death? and yet death will never come. There will be no other life for those miserable creatures than a perpetual death, and no other death than to live continually amidst those everlasting torments, which from their excessive violence, would incessantly destroy them; but the justice of God will not permit them to die, that they may continue suffering for all eternity. They shall eternally suffer all the pangs and agonies of a thousand deaths, without the power of dying. They shall be oppressed with unspeakable grief, and tortured with everlasting despair of being freed from their miseries. Their minds shall be always racked with this sad thought; *thou shalt never be freed from hence*. What! not after a thousand years? No. Not after ten thousand years? Not after a hundred thousand years? Not after a million of years? No, never. Thou shalt be eternally tormented. O eternity, how much thou art to be dreaded? Is it possible, *Theotime*, that you can read this without trembling? for my part, I can never think of it without horror. But it is to little purpose to have a dread of hell, if we do not endeavour to escape it: wherefore let us come to the conclusion which follows.

*Sin causes a miserable eternity.*

Conclu-

* Isai. xxxiii. 14. † Apocalypse ix. 6.

## Concluſion of this ARTICLE.

### *Of the pains of hell.*

IT is of infinite importance, not to read ſlightly and curſorily theſe frightful pains, that ſhall never have an end, into which we may daily fall. For this reaſon, *Theotime*, I conjure you to read them often with great attention, and add three or four reflections.

The firſt is, that all which we have ſaid, or can be ſpoken of theſe torments, is nothing, if compared to what they are in themſelves. We can neither find words to expreſs, nor ideas to conceive this ſtate of endleſs miſery.

The ſecond is, that theſe pains are a juſt puniſhment of mortal ſin. There is not any other, beſides that curſed cauſe, which has occaſioned theſe ſo dreadful effects of the divine wrath, and ſet God and man at ſuch an immenſe diſtance. *Your iniquities have divided between you and your God**. Theſe exquiſite and eternal pains may help us to underſtand three things; the *greatneſs and enormity* of mortal ſin; the *hatred* which *God* bears it, ſince he puniſhes it ſo dreadfully; and the *deteſtation* we ought to have of it, as well for thoſe pains, as for the hatred God bears to ſin.

The third is, that you have merited theſe pains of hell by the ſins you have committed, and already deſerved to be of the number of thoſe unhappy damned, to ſuffer the tortures which they endure, to be from this inſtant debarred of all hopes of ever ſeeing God, or ever being freed from hell. Is not this conſideration enough to make you weep and lament? and is not this an urgent motive to raiſe in you a deteſtation of ſin, which has caſt you into ſuch imminent danger, the very thought whereof ought to make you tremble?

But in the fourth place, reflect upon what has hitherto preſerved you from that dreadful danger; and you will find it to be no other, than the pure goodneſs of Almighty God, which has not treated you according to your deſerts, by permitting you to die in that ſinful ſtate, as moſt juſtly he might have done, and as he has done to others who have not committed greater ſins than yours, perhaps leſs. Where had you now been, had he treated you in that manner? You had been before now eternally loſt, and damned for ever. And why has he not done it, but only out of his infinite mercy, which daily waits for your repentance? O *Theotime*, how well may

* Iſai. lix. 2.

may you say with the prophet; *The mercies of the Lord that we are not consumed* *. Without a question it proceeds only from the pure mercy of God, that you have yet time to work out your salvation. How perfect then ought your love to be towards him, who has shewed himself so merciful towards you! and what can you refuse to do, in return for such favours received, and to make a right use of your time and the means he affords you for securing your salvation?

The fifth and last reflection is, that you cannot now work out your salvation, nor avoid for the future that eternal damnation, except you change your life, and do penance. *Except you do penance, you shall all perish* †. Take notice, Christ says *all* without exception, either of old or young, or what condition soever. Conclude from hence, and form your resolution: remember, that upon this resolution depends your salvation and your eternity. Wherefore do not make a slight, but a constant and an effectual resolution; such as is accompanied with a change of life.

## ARTICLE V.

*Of the effects which sin produces in respect of God himself.*

THIS title is surprising, and I declare, that if it be taken according to the rigour of the expression, it imports a thing equally incredible, as impossible: For how can God, who is perfectly unchangeable receive any alteration in himself from external causes? That sin should have filled heaven with disorders, earth with miseries, hell with confusion and horror, is but too true: but that God himself should be sensible of these effects, this cannot be easily understood.

It is true, *Theotime*, that this is hard to be understood, but the sacred scripture, that oracle of truth, represents to us in so many places the different effects which sin seems to cause in respect of God, that we cannot doubt it. For of all the passions which men conceive against what is displeasing; as grief, repentance, hatred, anger, indignation, fury; there is none which the scripture does not take notice of, as remarkable in God against sin.

It says, that God seeing the sins of men, was touched with a lively sorrow, and repented that he had created man, who had so heinously offended him. *It repented him that he had made man, being*

* Lam. iii. 22. † Luke xiii. 5.

*ing touched inwardly with ſorrow of heart* *. It ſays, that thoſe who ſin, contriſtate the Holy Ghoſt. *Grieve not the holy ſpirit of God* †. *To God the wicked and his wickedneſs are hateful alike* ‡. That he is angry againſt thoſe that offend him. That ſin kindles his fury and indignation: *The Lord was exceedingly angry with his people: and he abhorred his inheritance* §. The whole ſcripture is full of theſe expreſſions, which give us plainly to underſtand, that ſin which cauſed diſorder in all God's creatures, has not ſpared the Creator; and that this infernal monſter, as much as poſſible, attacks God himſelf, and, were it poſſible, would deſtroy him.

*Remark.* Indeed, *Theotime*, theſe different affections, which the ſcripture attributes to God in reſpect of ſin, are not to be found in God in the ſame manner as in men; for they cauſe in men a diſcompoſure of the mind, from whence they are called paſſions, or the ſufferings of the ſoul; but they make no ſuch change in God, who being unchangeable cannot be moved, or ſuffer by different affections. When therefore in ſcripture they are attributed to God, it is to be underſtood, no farther than as to the ſenſible effects he is pleaſed to manifeſt; and not as to any change of affection in God.

We may however hence form ſome notion of the malignity of mortal ſin. For it is reaſonable to judge of the evil tendency of a cauſe, by the bad effects which of its own nature it is capable of producing, although the effect may not follow, owing to ſome impediment. Sin of itſelf is ſufficient to produce in God all thoſe paſſions, though his ſovereign perfection renders him incapable of being agitated by them. This does not leſſen the malice of ſin, which were it poſſible would excite in God all thoſe paſſions of grief, hatred, anger, fury and indignation.

O ſin, how highly treaſonable art thou who dareſt to rebel againſt the Deity, and inſult his ſovereign majeſty, even on his throne of glory! The Prophet *Oſee* ſays, *Let Samaria periſh, becauſe ſhe hath ſtirred up her God to bitterneſs* ¶. So let ſin for ever periſh, which as much as in it lies, fills that infinite ocean of ſweetneſs and bounty with gall and bitterneſs!

Behold, *Theotime*, the reaſons we have to deteſt and abhor ſin, and from whence we may form a motive of true *Contrition*, that is, a reaſon why we are to deteſt ſin, not only for the evils which it expoſes

* Gen. vi. 6. † Eph. iv. 30. ‡ Wiſd. xiv. 9. § Pſam cv. 40. ¶ Oſ. xiv. 1.

expoſes us to, but for the evils with which it affects even God himſelf, whom it attempts to aſſault though in vain.

## ARTICLE VI.

*Of the effects of ſin in the perſon of* Jeſus Chriſt.

THAT which ſin could not effect in God, it has brought about, in his only ſon our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*. If the divinity, by reaſon of its infinite perfections, be raiſed above the attempts of this infernal monſter, the moſt ſacred humanity of the Son of God has ſuffered beyond all that we can either ſpeak or conceive. Conſider this well, *Theotime*, and obſerve the enormity of mortal ſin, by the greatneſs of thoſe evils which it made him to ſuffer, who undertook to deſtroy it.

*For ſin Chriſt came from heaven.*

Conſider firſt, that it was ſin which made the Son of God deſcend from heaven; that is, which obliged him to take upon himſelf our humanity, and ſtoop to that wonderful debaſement of his perſon, (which St. *Paul** called annihilation, or becoming nothing) as to make himſelf man for us, to take the habit and form of a ſervant, to put himſelf in a capacity of ſatisfying divine juſtice for the infinite injury done him by mortal ſin: an injury never to be repaired, but by one who is both God and man.

*For ſin Chriſt ſuffered.*

Secondly, this adorable myſtery of the incarnation was no ſooner accompliſhed, than the firſt thought of the Son of God made man was to offer himſelf in perſon to his eternal father, in ſatisfaction for the ſins of all men, as he himſelf ſaid by the prophet†. The ſacrifices, and holocauſts which hitherto have been offered to appeaſe thy wrath againſt ſin, were not able to give thee ſatisfaction: wherefore I am come, and knowing that it was thy will that I ſhould ſatisfy, I am content, O my God, and embrace with all my heart what thou haſt been pleaſed to decree.

From that firſt moment of the Son of God being conceived, till his paſſion, his life was a continual ſacrifice which he offered to his father; the divine love was always burning within him, and never allowed him any repoſe till he had accompliſhed the work he came for; and by his death had deſtroyed that monſter ſin. This he himſelf teſtified, when he ſaid, *I have a baptiſm where-*

* Phil. ii. 7. † Pſalm xxxix. 7, 8, 9.

*wherewith I am to be baptized: and how am I straitened interiorly until it be accomplished* *.

If we do but reflect upon the pains and toils of the life of the Son of God, his fasting, preaching, watchings, prayers, and all that he has done and suffered, as well in soul as body, during the thirty-three years of his mortal life, we shall easily perceive, that all tended to the destruction of sin, for which he principally came into the world.

The time being at length come, wherein he was to enter into the last combat of that so great war, which he was to wage against sin, and the Devil its first author; what was he not obliged to do and suffer, that he might conquer so base an enemy! Indeed he gained a glorious victory, but it was with the loss of his precious life, and at the price of his own death. But what a death, *Theotime?* A death full of sorrows and reproaches, the death of the cross; a death accompanied with pain and confusion, the death of the cross. A death accompanied with all imaginable affronts, executed by those he had in the highest degree obliged, betrayed and delivered up by one of his own disciples to his mortal enemies; abandoned by the rest, and denied by *Peter;* arraigned before a judge; accused as a criminal; sentenced and condemned as a malefactor; exposed to the derision of the multitude. Before his execution he was scourged with no less cruelty, than shame and disgrace; delivered over to the insolence of soldiers, who crowned him with thorns as a mock King; in fine, led to execution, nailed to the cross, exposed to the view of all the world between two thieves, as an impostor and the worst of men. Amidst these excessive pains of his body, and yet far greater anguishes of his soul, overwhelmed with sorrow and confusion, he expires upon the cross, and commends his spirit into his hands who had sent him.

O *Theotime*, have you ever thought on these sufferings of the Son of God, your Saviour? Or if you have thought on them, did you reflect with the attention they deserve? But perhaps you have not reflected upon that which caused them. Have you thoroughly considered that it was sin alone which crucified the Son of God? It is true, they were *Jews* who persecuted him to death; it was *Pilate* who condemned him, and the executioners who nailed him on the cross. It is also true, that he offered himself unto death, and underwent all these hardships voluntarily: *He was offered because*

* Luke xii. 50.

*cauſe it was his own will**. It is moreover moſt certain, that his eternal father required that of him, and obliged him to drink that bitter cup: It is alſo without a queſtion, that ſin was the firſt cauſe of the ſuffering of the Son of God. Sin firſt perſecuted him, and was at laſt his moſt cruel executioner. If he offered himſelf to death, it was, becauſe he had willingly charged himſelf with our ſins. If the eternal father would have him ſuffer, it was to receive from him the ſatisfaction which was due to his divine juſtice upon account of ſin. *The Lord*, ſaith *Iſaias*, *hath laid on him the iniquity of us all*†. And his eternal father ſays, that *For the wickedneſs of my people have I ſtruck him*‡.

Hearken here to the deſcription the ſame prophet *Iſaias* gives of the torments of the Son of God, which he ſaw as clearly in ſpirit, as if he had beheld them in effect. *There is no beauty in him, nor comelineſs: and we have ſeen him, deſpiſed, and the moſt abject of men, a man of ſorrows, and acquainted with infirmity: and his look* was *as it were hidden and deſpiſed, whereupon we eſteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our infirmities, and carried our ſorrows: and we have thought him as it were a leper, and as one ſtruck by God and afflicted. But he was wounded for our iniquities, he was bruiſed for our ſins: the chaſtiſement of our peace* was *upon him, and by his bruiſes we are healed*§.

Behold, dear *Theotime*, how much our ſins have made *Jeſus Chriſt* ſuffer. Behold to what condition that cruel enemy has reduced the Son of God. Is not this ſufficient to make us judge of the enormity of mortal ſin, ſeeing it made him ſuffer ſo great torments, who had undertaken to deſtroy it; ſeeing alſo the fault could not be expiated, nor the damage repaired, but by the death of a God made man, whoſe life is infinitely more eſtimable and precious than thoſe of all men, Angels, and the whole creation? Ought we not then to ſay, that the wounds we have received by ſin, are truly dreadful, ſince they could not be cured by any thing leſs than the blood of the Son of God? "O man acknowledge "how great thoſe gaſhes were, that obliged the only Son of God "to be wounded to cure them. If thoſe ſores had not been mor- "tal, and the cauſes of an eternal death, the Son of God had "never died for their recovery¶."

Can there be a ſtronger motive to lament and abhor our ſins, than to reflect that they were the cauſe of the Son of God ſuffering



* Iſai. liii. 7. † Iſai. liii. 6. ‡ Iſai. liii. 8. § Iſai. liii. 2, 3, 4, 5.
¶ St. Bernard, Serm. 3. de Nat. Dom.

ſo much, and dying upon the croſs? Have we not reaſon to ſigh and lament, as the *Jews* did for the deſtruction of the royal city of *Jeruſalem*, and the loſs of their king: *The crown is fallen from our head: wo to us, becauſe we have ſinned* *. How much more reaſon have we to lament, who by our ſins are the only cauſe of the death of *Jeſus Chriſt*, our king, our redeemer, and our glory!

Weigh well, *Theotime*, and meditate upon this motive of ſorrow and contrition; it will ſoften your heart, if it be not harder than marble. "It is a ſhameful thing for Chriſtians not to acknowledge the evils which ſin has brought upon them, when they conſider what ſo ſupreme a majeſty, as that of the Son of God, has been obliged to ſuffer for them. The Son of God takes compaſſion on the miſeries of man, and weeps; whilſt inſenſible man, who is overwhelmed with his own ſins, is not concerned†." O *Theotime*, be not ſo blind and inſenſible as to ſlight the grievouſneſs and enormity of mortal ſin, but conceive a hatred from the bottom of your heart againſt that infernal monſter, which could not be deſtroyed but by the paſſion and death of the Son of God.

The leaſt reflection on the paſſion of the Son of God, will teach you three important truths, which you ought never to forget. Firſt, you will conclude that ſin is a heinous evil, ſince nothing leſs than the death of the Son of God could deſtroy it. Secondly, that he muſt have ſuffered much, ſince ſo great an evil was to be deſtroyed. And thirdly, that the Son of God has loved us immenſely, ſince he has ſuffered ſo much to free us from ſo great an evil.

Theſe three conſiderations ought never to be ſeparated, the grievouſneſs of ſin, the great ſufferings of the Son of God, and the exceſs of his love in ſuffering to free us from this great evil. If you beſtow a little reflection on them, they will produce and ſettle theſe two affections in your ſoul, a deteſtation of ſin and a love of *Jeſus*. A deteſtation of ſin, which crucified your Saviour; and a love of your divine Saviour who gave himſelf to be crucified for your ſins. If you are not more inſenſible than brutes, you will ſay with St. *Paul*‡, *Anathema* to ſin and to all thoſe who do not love their Saviour. You will ſtand ſelf-convicted of having loved him

* Lam. v. 16. † St. Bernard, Serm. 3. de Nat. Dom. ‡ 1 Cor. xvi. 22.

him too little hitherto, and you will say with the same Apostle, that for the future you are resolved to love him with all your soul, *who loved* you, *and delivered himself for* you *."

## CHAP. XII.

*The practice of contrition upon the preceding motives.*

LET us now resume all we have said concerning the motives of *contrition* from the eighth chapter, that we may come to the practice of this great virtue, without which it is impossible to be justified in the sight of God.

To have *contrition*, we must conceive the enormity of mortal sin, which we have demonstrated from several heads.

First, because it is incomprehensible in itself.

Secondly, from the knowledge we have of it from the sacred scripture, which discovers to us the several great indignities found in sin; calling it a rebellion against God, a detestable ingratitude, a contempt of his holy will, a postponing the Creator to the creature, and a preferring of our own will before the will of God.

Thirdly, from the heinous injury which by sin is done to God; an injury so great, that man of himself is incapable of making satisfaction for it.

Fourthly, from the dreadful effects caused by sin throughout the creation; in heaven, in earth, in hell; in the Angels, in man, in God himself, and in his Son *Jesus Christ*.

All these motives are very efficacious towards influencing that deep sorrow, which is called *contrition*, if you read them with the attention they deserve. Endeavour to understand and remember them: read them again and again, and pause some time upon those which move you most; weigh them well, and imprint them in your heart: and having understood them, cast yourself upon your knees, and bewail your sins in the presence of God upon those motives which affected you most, and beg pardon, beseeching him to shew his mercy towards you, making use of this or the like prayer.

'O my God! see me prostrate before thy divine majesty to ac-
'knowledge my wretched state, and implore thy mercy. I pre-
'sent myself to thee as my judge, whose justice I ought to dread.
'I confess my guilt, and that I have deserved thy just indignation.
'Thou art he, O my God, whom I have offended, whom I have



* Gal. ii. 20.

'insulted; rebellious, ungrateful, and perfidious creature as I am. 'Thee have I abandoned to follow my pleasures and passions; I 'have lost thy grace by my sins, and made my soul a slave to the 'Devil. I have lost heaven my blessed country; I have deserved 'hell and eternal damnation, which I shall never be able to avoid 'without the assistance of thy great mercy. But above all, I have 'infinitely offended thy bounty: the injury which I have offered 'it, is so great, that it caused thy Son *Jesus Christ* my Saviour to 'suffer death. O my God, how can I worthily deplore so great 'an evil! who will give water to my head, and a fountain of Tears 'to my eyes to deplore night and day my misery and malice, 'and to atone for my sins? It is from thee alone, O my God, that 'I can expect so great a favour. I beg this so necessary *contrition*, 'without which I cannot hope for mercy. Give me that contrite 'and humble heart, which is that agreeable sacrifice which thou 'wilt never despise. I beg with my whole soul, that by thy grace 'I may deserve thy mercy.'

Say this or the like prayer with the greatest devotion, and a due sense of your own misery; afterwards turn your mind to the preceding motives, in order to excite this necessary sorrow, hatred of sin, regret for having committed it, and resolution of doing so no more, dwelling chiefly on the motives which affect you most. That you may perform it the better, employ this last means I am going to propose.

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## CHAP. XIII.

*Examples of repentance taken out of holy writ.*

ALTHOUGH what we have said might suffice to excite a true sorrow for our sins; yet we will add another prevailing motive, taken from the example of those true penitents found both in the Old and New Testament, who may serve as models to repenting sinners.

*David.* Consider *David* after his sin, how full of interior trouble and concern he was for the evil he had done; bedewing, as he says, his bed with his tears, and having always his sin before his eyes, imploring mercy of God, and beseeching him to turn away his eyes from his iniquities, not to take away from him his holy spirit, nor to despise the sacrifice which he offered him, of an afflicted mind, of

an humble and contrite heart. Behold a true penitent, behold what true *contrition* is. Imitate this example, and you will become a true penitent. You will find the excellent diſpoſitions of a penitent mind in the ſeven penitential Pſalms, if you read them with attention.

Behold King *Ezechias* weeping and lamenting in the preſence of God, and promiſing to recount in the bitterneſs of his ſoul all his miſpent years, in order to bewail his ſins, and obtain mercy. Read his Canticle, which begins, *Ego dixi in dimidio* *. *Ezechias.*

Caſt your eyes upon thoſe good *Iſraelites*, who were ſent captives into *Babylon* after the taking of *Jeruſalem*, doing penance for their ſins, which had reduced them to that miſerable ſtate, and crying out to God from the bottom of their hearts, *We have ſinned againſt the Lord our God, by not obeying his voice. To the Lord our God* belongeth *juſtice: but to us confuſion of face*, which our ſins have deſerved. *We have ſinned, we have done wickedly, we have acted unjuſtly, O Lord our God, againſt all thy juſtices. Let thy wrath be turned away from us: hear, O Lord, our prayers and our petitions: open thy eyes and behold: for the dead ſhall not give glory to the Lord: but the ſoul, that is ſorrowful for the greatneſs of the evil ſhe* hath done, and performs due penance †. *The captive Iſraelites.*

Conſider *Manaſſes* alſo in his converſion groaning under the weight of his ſins, and lamenting his iniquities with ſuch a ſorrow, that he owned himſelf unworthy even to lift up his eyes towards heaven; ſo great, he confeſt, were his offences! You will perceive his words to proceed from a truly penitent ſoul, overwhelmed with ſorrow for his ſins. 'Tis true, O Lord, ſays he, I have infinitely offended thee, and my ſins are more in number than the ſand of the ſea; I am unworthy to lift up my eyes towards heaven to crave thy mercy, having provoked thy anger, as I have done, by my iniquities: but now, O my God, I proſtrate myſelf from my heart before thee to beg thy mercy. I have ſinned, O my God, I have ſinned: I acknowledge all the evil I have done. Pardon, O Lord, thy pardon I moſt earneſtly beg of thee. Do not deſtroy me with my iniquities; do not reſerve me to the utmoſt rigour of thy juſtice; do not condemn me for ever to the *Manaſſes.* *The prayer of Manaſſes.*



* Iſai. xxxviii. 12. † Baruch ii. 5, 6, 12, 13, 14, 17, 18.

fire of hell. Remember that thou art my God; the God of penitents, and thy immenſe bounty will beſt appear in me, whilſt it makes thee to ſave a miſerable ſinner unworthy of thy grace, and gives me occaſion to praiſe thee eternally for thy infinite goodneſs.

Go to the Goſpel, and there you will find ſtill more ſtriking examples of penance and contrition.

*S. Mary Magdalene.*

There you may ſee a holy penitent, moved to that degree with ſorrow for her ſins, that ſcorning what men might ſay, ſhe runs to the Son of God, caſts herſelf at his feet, waſhes them with her tears, ſo abundantly did they flow, wipes them with her hair, and anoints them with precious ointment: thus conſecrating theſe riches, that hair, thoſe tears, to pious uſes, which till then ſhe had employed in vanity. And thus that ſorrow, ſhe had ſo happily conceived, broke forth into all the ſigns of the love of God, and ſpared nothing to ſerve him, from whom ſhe expected the remiſſion of her ſins. So that ſhe deſerved to hear from the mouth of our Saviour, that *many ſins are forgiven her, for ſhe hath loved much* *.

*S. Peter.*

There you will find the head of the Apoſtles unfortunately fallen, by denying his divine maſter three ſeveral times. But he had ſcarce ended his laſt denial, when our Saviour by a glance of his eyes, which penetrated *Peter's* heart, makes him return to himſelf, acknowledge his fault, and conceive ſo great a grief, that *going forth he wept bitterly for the ſin* †. His grief was ſo unremitted, that it ended only with his life.

You will find in the goſpel two other examples of true penance, which the Son of God himſelf propoſed in two parables ſet forth for that intent. The firſt is, the perſon of the

*The prodigal.*

prodigal ſon, under which figure he ſets before our eyes a perfect pattern of a ſinner returning to God by penance. This profligate young man, after he had ſpent all his eſtate, is forced by the ſenſe of his miſeries to reflect or return to himſelf, and ſay: *How many hired ſervants in my father's houſe have plenty of bread, and I here periſh with hunger? I will ariſe, and go to my father, and ſay to him: Father, I have ſinned againſt heaven, and before thee: I am not now worthy to be called thy ſon; make me as one of thy hired ſervants* ‡. He no ſooner ſpoke theſe words, than he puts them in execution, leaves the place of his

* Luke vii. 47. † Mat. xxvi. 75. ‡ Luke xv. 17, 18, 19.

his misery, comes and casts himself at his father's feet, to beg mercy at his hands; and such and so great was this his repentance, that whereas he only requested a place among his servants, he was admitted to that of his son which he had lost.

Consider well this pattern, *Theotime*, imitate it in your repentance and conversion. First, practise well that which is signified by these words, *returning to himself:* for we must enter into ourselves to return to God; that is to say, we must acknowledge the miserable condition to which we are reduced by sin, the distance from God, the loss of his grace, the want of spiritual favours, and particularly of divine inspirations, and above all, the continual danger of damnation.

Secondly, in this view of your misery, conceive a horror of it, and form in your heart a ready and firm resolution to return to your heavenly father, in those words of the prodigal son: *I will arise* from my misery, *and will go to my* eternal *father;* I will declare my fault, and ask him pardon, submitting myself in all things to his will.

Thirdly, do not defer, no more than the prodigal son, the performance of your resolution; begin immediately and in earnest to do penance for your sins: prostrate yourself in the presence of God, and beg his pardon, prepare yourself for a good confession, using all the necessary means to make it well: and in this confession, or even before, make use often of those words of the prodigal: *Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee: I am not now worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.* But consider attentively their meaning. By those words you profess to God that you have grievously offended his fatherly bounty; that, as a degenerate child, you have abused all his graces; that you have not been ashamed to affront him even in his presence, and in the sight of the whole court of heaven; that you acknowledge yourself unworthy to appear before him, or from thenceforward to be treated by him as his child; that you only implore his mercy and the pardon of your sins, protesting to serve him faithfully from henceforward, to do penance, and execute all his commands, as a good and faithful servant. What an excellent pattern is this, *Theotime*, if you will but imitate it!

The other example is that of the publican, in whose person the Son of God has again represented to the life, the dispositions which he requires in a true penitent: and that he might set it forth to *The publican.*

the beſt advantage, he places in contraſt a falſe penitent, whoſe repentance was only in appearance.

*Two men*, ſays he, *went up into the temple to pray: the one was a Phariſee, and the other a publican. The Phariſee ſtanding prayed thus with himſelf: O God, I give thee thanks that I am not as the reſt of men, extortioners, unjuſt, adulterers, as alſo as this publican. I faſt twice in the week: I give tithes of all that I poſſeſs* *. Behold an example of a falſe penitent, who has no ſorrow for his own ſins, but who looks more into the ſins of others than his own; who juſtifies himſelf by the ſins he has not committed, inſtead of condemning himſelf for thoſe he is guilty of; who eſteems himſelf juſt before God, when he is exempt from ſome certain ſins, although he commit others, and ſometimes greater; who thinks he ſufficiently ſatisfies for his ſins by ſome exterior good works, as faſting, and the like, neglecting in the mean time true compunction of heart, and the amendment of life. Behold the idea of a falſe penitent, which is but too frequently found among Chriſtians. Read now the deſcription of a true one.

On the contrary, *The publican*, ſays our Saviour, *ſtanding afar off would not ſo much as lift up his eyes towards heaven; but ſtruck his breaſt, ſaying: O God be merciful to me a ſinner* †. In this example are ſet forth all the diſpoſitions of a true penitent.

Firſt, a profound humility, which made him ſtay below in the temple at a diſtance, and ſeparated from others, as if he apprehended himſelf, by reaſon of his ſins, unworthy to approach to God, or intermix himſelf amongſt the juſt. "But as much as "he retired farther off in himſelf, ſo much he approached nearer "to God ‡."

Secondly, The ſhame and confuſion with which he was covered to appear before God with a conſcience thus burthened with ſins; a confuſion ſo great, that it hindered him from raiſing his eyes towards heaven.

Thirdly, The ſorrow he had in his heart for having grievouſly offended God, in token whereof he ſmites his breaſt, "denoting by "that action the ſins concealed within §."

Fourthly, The pardon he implored of God, as a true penitent, having no other motive than his own unworthineſs on the one ſide, and on the other the pure mercy of God, from which alone he hoped for pardon, and not from his own merits.

Behold,

* Luke xviii. 10, 11, 12. † Luke xviii. 13. ‡ St Auſtin, Serm. 36. de verb. Dom. § St Cyprian, de Orat. Dominica.

Behold, *Theotime*, examples and patterns of true repentance, by which we ought to form and model ours. They are propoſed to us by the Holy Ghoſt for that end; and the two laſt were drawn, and formed by the Son of God, to teach us how to behave in ſo ſerious an affair. For this reaſon, if you reſolve to do penance and be truly converted, you muſt read them attentively; conſider their whole conduct, in order to conform yourſelf to it as near as you can. "And as you have imitated thoſe penitents in their ſins and extra-"vagances; ſo alſo imitate them in their repentance *;" as St. *Ambroſe* ſaid to the great emperor *Theodoſius*.

## PART III.

## *Of CONFESSION.*

HAVING ſpoken of *contrition*, and the preparations neceſſary to obtain that eminent virtue; we now come to the confeſſion of ſins, which is the ſecond part of penance, as we have ſaid above, in Part II. Chap. II. which you would do well to read once more, for it ſerves as a foundation to all we are about to ſay of *confeſſion*, which we ſhall treat with all poſſible brevity, yet not without giving you all the knowledge neceſſary to make it well. I beſeech you then, *Theotime*, to read with attention what we are about to ſay.

### CHAP. I.

*Of the inſtitution and neceſſity of confeſſion.*

THE firſt thing to be known about this ſubject is, who inſtituted confeſſion, and of what neceſſity it is for the ſalvation of ſouls.

We cannot better learn theſe two truths than from the holy church, which has clearly explained them by the council of *Trent* †.

The council ſays, "that penance was always neceſſary before "the law of grace, for all thoſe who had ſinned mortally, and "that they could never receive the remiſſion of their ſins, but by "deteſting them with a holy hatred, and a ſorrow of mind for the "offence they had committed againſt God: yet that this virtue "was not raiſed to the dignity of a ſacrament, before the coming of

* Paulin. vit. Ambr. n. 24. † Seſſ. 14. Chap. 1.

" of the Son of God, who inſtituted it on the day of his reſur-
" rection, when being in the midſt of his Apoſtles *he breathed on*
" *them*, ſaying: *Receive ye the Holy Ghoſt: whoſe* ſins *you ſhall for-*
" *give, they are forgiven them: and whoſe* ſins *you ſhall retain, they*
" *are retained**."

" By this ſo remarkable an action, (ſay the council) and by
" thoſe ſo diſtinct words, the fathers, with a common conſent,
" have always underſtood, that the power of remitting or retain-
" ing ſins was given to the Apoſtles and their lawful ſucceſſors, to
" reconcile thoſe to God, who had fallen into ſin after baptiſm†."

And in the fifth chapter, treating of the inſtitution and neceſſity of the confeſſion of ſins, which is the ſecond part of this ſacrament, it ſpeaks in theſe terms: " Concerning the inſtitution of the
" ſacrament of penance already explained, the univerſal church
" has always underſtood, that our Lord inſtituted the entire con-
" feſſion of ſins, and that it is neceſſary by divine appointment for
" all thoſe who have fallen into mortal ſin after baptiſm. Becauſe
" our Lord Jeſus Chriſt being ready to aſcend into heaven has left
" prieſts in his place, in quality of preſidents and judges, to whom
" all the ſins which the faithful had committed after baptiſm
" ought to be diſcovered, that they might give their judgment
" either of abſolution or retention, by virtue of that power which
" was given them."

*Two truths.* From all this doctrine of the holy church we learn two truths: The firſt is, that confeſſion is inſtituted by *Jeſus Chriſt*; the ſecond, that it is neceſſary by divine appointment for the remiſſion of mortal ſins committed after baptiſm, as baptiſm is neceſſary for the remiſſion of original ſin.

We muſt notwithſtanding take notice, that in caſe of neceſſity, and where confeſſion is impoſſible, it may be ſupplied by contrition, as baptiſm is alſo ſupplied by the ſame means in thoſe who are capable of it, becauſe in this contrition is included a will to receive baptiſm, or make a confeſſion: but in this caſe it is neceſſary that the contrition be perfect, and proceed from the pure love of God.

CHAP.

* Joh. xx. 22, 23. † Con. Trid. Seſſ. 14. cap. 1.

## CHAP. II.

### *What ſacramental confeſſion is.*

THIS word *confeſſion* is underſtood two ways in ſcripture; ſometimes it ſignifies the praiſe of God, ſometimes the accuſation of ſins; and the reaſon is, becauſe that word ſignifies an avowal and an acknowledgment; and to *confeſs* ſignifies to avow or acknowledge any thing. When we acknowledge the greatneſs of God or his benefits, this is called confeſſion, which ſignifies as much as the praiſe or bleſſing we give to God. When we acknowledge the ſins we have committed, it is a confeſſion by which we accuſe ourſelves. " Confeſſion belongs not only to ſin-" ners who accuſe themſelves, but alſo to him that praiſes God *." " Theſe two confeſſions are neceſſary, the one for ſinners, the " other for the juſt. Each one of theſe, offers a ſacrifice to " God, the one of contrition, the other of praiſe. Without " the firſt ſinners continue in death, and the juſt without the " ſecond are accounted ungrateful to God; and thus confeſſion " gives life to ſinners, and glory to the juſt †."

We mean here only to ſpeak of the confeſſion of ſins, inaſmuch as it is a part of the ſacrament of penance, which we define thus: *Confeſſion defined.*

" An accuſation of all the ſins one has committed to the prieſt, as " vicar of *Jeſus Chriſt*, in order to receive abſolution."

In this definition we muſt particularly take notice of the word *accuſation*, which ſignifies much, but commonly is little underſtood; for it does not ſignify a bare recital of their ſins, which all thoſe chriſtians falſely deem to be ſufficient, who confeſs their ſins, as if they were relating a ſtory. This word implies quite another thing, and means a declaration which the penitent makes of his ſins to the prieſt, as a criminal to his judge, with an intention of acknowledging his guilt, and moſt earneſtly ſuing for pardon; at the ſame time ſhewing a regret for paſt ſins, and a reſolution of never more committing them, and moreover of performing ſuch penance as ſhall be enjoined.

" It is rightly called an accuſation, becauſe ſins are not to be ſo " recounted as though we boaſted of our wickedneſs; nor are " they to be ſo told, as if for divertiſement to ſome idle hearers " we

* S. Aug. Serm. 8. de verb. Dom. † S. Bernard, Serm. 40 de diverſis.

" we were telling a ſtory. But they are to be ſo declared by a " mind accuſing itſelf, as that we deſire alſo to revenge them in " ourſelves *:" That is, we muſt accuſe ourſelves with the ſentiments and diſpoſition of a criminal before his judge. Becauſe the ſacrament of penance is inſtituted by the Son of God as a tribunal and judgment, where the ſins of the faithful muſt be diſcovered before the prieſt, who ought to judge them, and where the penitent ought to appear as ſelf-convicted: Now he cannot appear as ſuch if he be not accuſed, and he cannot be accuſed but by himſelf; the declaration then of his ſins ſhould have every mark of an humble ſolicitation for divine mercy.

## CHAP. III.

### *Of the conditions requiſite for a good confeſſion.*

IT is eaſy to form a judgment of them from the precedent definition: for ſince it is an accuſation, it ought to have two conditions among others: it muſt be *entire*, that is, of all the ſins committed, and it muſt be made with *ſorrow* for having committed them. He who accuſes himſelf in order to obtain pardon, muſt accuſe himſelf of all the evil he has done, and teſtify the *ſorrow* he has for his faults.

Theſe two conditions produce ſome others: for the *integrity* requires it ſhould be *clear* and *ſhort*: the *ſorrow* produces a *ſhame* for having ſinned, and a *ſubmiſſion* to the will of the perſon offended, with a view to obtain pardon upon whatever conditions he may be ſubjected to.

*Six conditions.* Theſe ſix conditions are requiſite for a good confeſſion. It ought to be *entire*, *clear*, *ſhort*, made with confuſion and *ſhame* of the evil, with *ſorrow* for having committed it, and with *ſubmiſſion* to the perſon offended.

*Entire.* It ought to be *entire*, that is, of all the ſins he remembers, after a diligent and ſufficient examen. This is to be underſtood of mortal ſins, and without this condition the confeſſion is null: becauſe mortal ſins cannot be pardoned ſeparately one without another, becauſe they are all oppoſite to ſanctifying grace, and any one amongſt them remaining in the ſoul, hinders the divine grace from

* Cat. Trid. de penit. n. 51.

from entering there; hence if we ſhould conceal but one only mortal ſin in confeſſion, the ſacrament cannot produce its effect, which is the ſanctification of the ſoul by the infuſion of grace.

It ought to be *clear*, that is, as intelligible as poſſible: he ought to have a ſincere will to make himſelf underſtood by his confeſſor, and in conſequence muſt avoid obſcurity, at leaſt he muſt not affect or deſire to be obſcure; for this would be an evident ſign that he has a mind to conceal ſome ſins. *Clear.*

It muſt be *ſhort*, in ſaying no more than neceſſary to make himſelf rightly underſtood; he muſt avoid ſuperfluous words, repetitions, and impertinent narrations, too frequent among penitents. He muſt ſimply confeſs his ſins in this manner: I accuſe myſelf that I have committed ſuch a ſin; and adding only that which is neceſſary to make the confeſſor underſtand the quality of the ſin, or anſwering to the queſtion he ſhall aſk to inform himſelf. *Short.*

It muſt be *modeſt*, that is, expreſſed with great interior confuſion for having offended God. A confuſion which makes us bluſh to ſee ourſelves ſo criminal in the ſight of God, without making us conceal our ſins, but rather making us ingenuouſly and humbly declare them to man, who here holds the place of God. For the penitent, who acknowledges himſelf guilty in the ſight of God, readily diſcloſes them to men. *The juſt*, that is, he who deſires to become juſt, *is firſt accuſer of himſelf**. *Diſcover firſt thy* ſins, *that thou mayeſt be juſtified* †. *From my ſecret* ſins *cleanſe me, O Lord* ‡. *Modeſt.*

It ought to be *ſorrowful*, that is, with a ſentiment of grief and regret for the ſins he accuſes himſelf of, otherwiſe it would not be an accuſation, as we mentioned above. *Sorrowful.*

In fine, it muſt be *humble*, that is, the penitent ought to acknowledge himſelf guilty, declare that he deſerves to be puniſhed, and ſubmit himſelf to the conditions his judge ſhall appoint for the remiſſion of his ſins. *Humble.*

CHAP.

* Prov. xviii. 17. † Iſai. xliii. 6. ‡ Pſalm xviii. 13.

## CHAP. IV.

### *Of the defects in confeſſion.*

AS we have ſaid that there are ſix conditions required, ſo alſo it is manifeſt that there are ſix defects. The want of ſorrow, clearneſs, *&c.* Notwithſtanding, every one of them do not make the confeſſion null; but only the want of thoſe eſſentially neceſſary conditions, which are integrity and contrition, and from whence the others ſpring.

*Want of integrity, or ſorrow, makes the confeſſion null.*

The want of integrity as alſo the want of ſorrow render the confeſſion null: this is a certain maxim, which we muſt carry along with us, that there are two things neceſſary in the penitent, entire confeſſion and true contrition. If one of theſe be wanting through the penitent's fault, the ſacrament is null, and the confeſſion ſacrilegious.

The want of the other conditions renders the confeſſion imperfect, but not invalid, except they be ſuch as deſtroy one of thoſe two eſſential conditions, integrity or ſorrow. Thus the defect of clearneſs may be ſuch, that the confeſſor cannot underſtand all the mortal ſins; in which caſe it renders the confeſſion null, eſpecially if that obſcurity be affected on purpoſe; the want of humble ſubmiſſion may be ſo great as to deſtroy contrition; and ſo of others.

There are three caſes where integrity is wanting in confeſſion. The firſt, when willingly and knowingly one conceals a mortal ſin for ſhame, fear, negligence, or otherwiſe.

The ſecond, when one conceals it indirectly, as when he accuſes himſelf in obſcure or ambiguous terms, with a deſign that the confeſſor ſhould not underſtand all that he meant to ſay, or even if he perceives that he did not underſtand him; or when he accuſes himſelf by halves leaving the reſt to be gueſſed at, or to be aſked by the confeſſor, which happens often to young people.

The third, when one has not made a ſufficient examen of his conſcience, but goes preſently to confeſſion, knowing well enough he is not ſufficiently prepared: for although there be a difference between concealing and forgetting a ſin in confeſſion; that forgetfulneſs does not make the confeſſion invalid, when it is not voluntary, or through negligence; for when we are the cauſe of ſuch forgetfulneſs, it is certainly a ſin, which renders the confeſſion null,

null, from the axiom; he who desires the cause, is judged also to desire the effect, which infallibly follows it.

As to the sorrow for sins, there are many cases wherein the penitent is deficient.

First, when he has made no act of contrition, neither before nor during confession, nor before he receives absolution: in this case the confession is invalid, although it may proceed from pure forgetfulness; because it is essential to the sacrament; it cannot be supplied by any other action.

Secondly, when he makes such an act, but without due conditions; as without supernatural motives, or with a reserve or exception of some mortal sin, for which one retains an affection; in a word, without the conditions spoken of before in Part II. Chap. IV. which you should remember.

Thirdly, when he has not a sincere resolution of amendment; as when the penitent will not leave the occasion of sin, practise the necessary remedies, nor obey his confessor in what is highly reasonable.

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## CHAP. V.

### *Of the conditions necessary to make the confession entire.*

*The nature, number, and circumstances of sins must be confessed.*

According to the doctrine of the church there are three: To declare the nature of the sin, the number, and the circumstances that change the nature of it.

First, we must confess the nature of the sin: it is not sufficient to say in general terms, I have sinned, I have very much offended God; but we must tell particularly in what: I have committed theft, blasphemy, or detraction.

The reason of this rule is given by the holy council of *Trent*; priests are constituted judges in this sacrament, to pass a judgment upon the sins of men: Now they cannot exercise that judgment without the knowledge of the cause, nor observe the necessary equity in the enjoining of the penance, except penitents declare their sins in particular, and not only in general terms.

Secondly they must declare the number, that is, how often they have fallen into each kind of sin. This is also absolutely necessary, that the confessor may judge aright: because he who has

has committed a sin often, is much more guilty than he who has done it but seldom.

Thirdly, we must explain the circumstances which change the nature of the sin, as the same council has declared in expres terms; for the same reason that obliges us to confess the sins of a different nature. Thus in theft one must express the circumstance of a sacred place, in which he robbed, or a sacred thing which he has taken: because this circumstance changes the nature, and makes it a sacrilege.

In sins of impurity, we must discover the quality of the person with whom we have sinned, whether a single, or married person, or relation; for these circumstances make different sins, of fornication, adultery, or incest.

Penitents, particularly young people, are often defective in these three rules. For first, as to the nature of the sin, it happens frequently that they do not declare it at all. For example, concerning the sin of impurity, they say no more than that they have willingly entertained evil thoughts, without mentioning in the least, whether they were accompanied with any immodest touches of themselves, or other effects which follow from thence, which are sins of another nature, and more grievous than the thoughts. They will confess they have touched others immodestly, without discovering how, or what sort of persons. They will accuse themselves of detraction, but not offer to declare the thing they have said.

Secondly, as to the number, it happens often, that telling the nature they are afraid to discover the full number, therefore conceal some part, the number sometimes causing as much shame as the nature and quality of the sin. In which case the confession is no less invalid and sacrilegious, than if they had concealed the very nature of the sin.

Thirdly, they frequently commit the same fault by concealing the aggravating circumstances through fear or shame. For example, if they have robbed, or done some considerable injury to their neighbour's goods, or cheated him at play, they are afraid to tell the quantity, lest they should be obliged to restitution.

In all these occurrences when one willingly and wittingly conceals such circumstances, the confession is null. I beseech you, *Theotime*, to avoid these essential faults, which often happen in confession, for want of discovering the nature or kind of the sin, the number, or aggravating circumstances.

CHAP.

## CHAP. VI.

### *Advice concerning the number of ſins.*

I Have here an advice of great concern to impart to you, dear *Theotime*, about the number of ſins. It is, to avoid in confeſſion two extremes equally vitious: the one is ſupine negligence; the other is too much exactneſs and ſcrupuloſity. *Two faults.*

Some, to avoid the trouble of a due examination of their conſcience, diſcover nothing of the number of mortal ſins, or if they do, it is with great uncertainty. I have done it for example, twenty times more or leſs; or elſe they declare a greater number than they are guilty of, to comprehend therein the number they might have committed: this does not ſatisfy the exactneſs which is neceſſary in confeſſion. *Negligence.*

Others on the contrary are ſo intent upon the ſearch of their ſins, and the number of them, that they are never quiet, but vex themſelves with continual doubts and anxiety of mind, never believing they have ſufficiently examined their conſcience. This makes them think of nothing but this examen, and little or nothing of the principal concern, which is *contrition.*

Theſe two faults muſt neceſſarily be avoided. For the firſt may render the confeſſion invalid for want of *integrity*, the other for want of *contrition.*

Thoſe who find themſelves guilty of negligence, ought to remember what diligence is neceſſary to diſpoſe themſelves for a thing of ſuch high concern, as is the obtaining of the remiſſion of their ſins; and ſince without confeſſing them all, that cannot be acquired, it is neceſſary they ſhould endeavour with great diligence to remember them, in order to accuſe themſelves. This is the rule which the council of *Trent* gives, when it ſays: "It is neceſ-"ſary that the penitents declare all the ſins they remember after a "diligent examen, even thoſe that are moſt hidden*."

As to thoſe others, who trouble and diſquiet themſelves with the examen of their ſins, they are to be fully perſuaded of this truth, that God requires no more of them in this, or any other occaſion, than what they are able to perform; and that after they have done what, morally ſpeaking, they are able, in order to remember *Scrupuloſity.*



* Seſſ. 14. c. v. de Confeſſ.

their sins, they ought to declare what they remember, and be no farther solicitous; it being most certain, that other sins which they have forgot are to be comprehended in that confession; and that they are pardoned them in the absolution they receive.

This also is a rule of the holy church in the council of *Trent*, which condemns those of impiety, who say*: "That the confession of all their sins is an impossibility, and a torture of the conscience: it being certain, says the council, that the church requires no more of penitents, than that every one after he has made a careful examen, and search into his conscience, should confess those sins which occur to his memory: and that other sins, which, notwithstanding such an examen, they do not remember, are esteemed to be generally comprehended in the same confession; and that it is of these sins we say to God with the prophet: *Cleanse me from my hidden sins, O Lord*†."

Those who follow this maxim of the church will easily find quiet of mind, and banish the difficulties which arise from their confessions. It is true, they are still in doubt, whether in their examen they used that diligence which the church requires. We shall tell you hereafter in the ninth chapter wherein it consists; in the mean time I shall mind you of two things here for your comfort.

First, that this obligatory diligence reaches only to mortal sins.

Secondly, that when, after a serious examen a person cannot call to mind the number of his sins; as it happens in sins of habit or custom, which are frequently committed, as ill thoughts, dishonest words, oaths, and the like, it is sufficient to discover, as near as one can, the time since he was first subject to it; and in that time to take notice, as much as may be, how often he may have fallen into them every day, every week, or the like; and after one has declared what he can in this manner, he ought not to trouble himself any farther.

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## CHAP. VII.

*Advice concerning the circumstances of sins.*

*The nature of a circumstance.*

THE particular accidents which intervene, and are not of the substance of a deed, but only accompany it, are called circumstances; as

* Sess. 14. c. v. de Confess. † Psal. xviii. 13.

as the quality of the perſon who ſins, the place, the time, the deſign with which he acted, the end which was propoſed, the means made uſe of, the conſequence and evil effects of an action, as ſcandal, or the like.

Of circumſtances ſome are only trivial, which render not an action worſe than it is of itſelf, and of theſe we do not ſpeak. There are others that are heinous, and which aggravate exceedingly an action; of theſe we treat in this place. There are two ſorts of them.

Some aggravate a ſin to that degree, that they change the nature of it; thus the circumſtance of a ſacred place, or a ſacred thing which is ſtolen, changes the ſin of theft into ſacrilege, which is a different kind of ſin.

Others aggravate only the ſin without changing the ſpecies, and are called ſimply aggravating circumſtances.

As to the former, there is no queſtion but it is neceſſary to declare them in *confeſſion*; and as to the latter it is always moſt adviſable to declare them in *confeſſion*.

It even frequently happens that one is obliged to it; as in theſe following examples.

1. When one cannot diſcern whether a circumſtance, which one believes to be conſiderable, changes the ſin, or not. For without a large ſhare of learning who is able to do this?

2. When it falls out that a circumſtance makes a ſin to be mortal, which otherwiſe would be but venial. Thus, to ſteal ſix pence is but a venial ſin; but to ſteal ſix pence from a poor man that had nothing elſe to live upon, is a mortal ſin. He who ſtrikes another, and does him no hurt, commits but a venial ſin; but if in ſtriking him he had an intention to hurt him conſiderably, he commits a mortal ſin; and he ought to declare that intention, when he accuſes himſelf of having ſtruck him.

3. One is alſo obliged to mention all ſuch circumſtances, as exceedingly aggravate a mortal ſin. For example: a man who has ſtolen five pounds has ſinned mortally; another who has ſtolen twenty thouſand pounds, has alſo committed a mortal ſin, but incomparably a greater. This exceſs ought to be expreſſed in *confeſſion*.

4. This declaration is generally neceſſary, that the confeſſor may underſtand the grievouſneſs of the ſin, and the preſent ſtate of the

penitent, without which he can neither impoſe a penance ſuitable to paſt ſins, nor preſcribe remedies to avoid them for the future.

In ſhort, to declare ingenuouſly his ſins, with all their circumſtances, is a ſign of a ſincere and truly penitent heart, deſirous of healing and ſaving his ſoul.

*Practice.* For this reaſon, *Theotime*, when you accuſe yourſelf of ſin, explain diſtinctly and clearly the circumſtances, which ſeem to render it more grievous in the ſight of God. For example, from what motive you did it; whether through paſſion or malice, whether with an intention to hurt another or diſpleaſe him; whether ſcandal, or any other ill effect followed from the ſin; whether it was in a holy place, or the like: and anſwer always with ſincerity the queſtions your ſpiritual director may aſk concerning your ſins.

## CHAP. VIII.

*How great an evil it is to conceal a mortal ſin in* confeſſion.

I WISH this evil was as rare and unheard of among Chriſtians, as it is great in itſelf, and of moſt dreadful conſequence to thoſe who commit it. It is unhappily but too common among penitents, and particularly among ſimple and young people, becauſe they know not how grievous a ſin it is, and the dreadful conſequences it draws after it. This is the reaſon why I treat of it in this place.

*Concealment of a mortal ſin is a mortal ſin.* Firſt then, *Theotime*, you muſt know that willingly to conceal any mortal ſin, or what you believe to be ſuch, is alſo a mortal ſin: Becauſe our Saviour giving to the Apoſtles and their ſucceſſors the power to remit or retain ſins, has alſo obliged the faithful to confeſs all the ſins which after a ſufficient examen they remember. Thus to conceal a mortal ſin in confeſſion is a formal diſobedience to the law of *Jeſus Chriſt* in a matter of the higheſt concern, and is in itſelf a mortal ſin.

*A lie unto the Holy Ghoſt.* Secondly, this ſin is a formal and poſitive untruth even in the important concern of ſalvation; an untruth not told to man, but to God, whoſe place the prieſt holds in confeſſion. Now to tell a lie to God is a monſtrous crime. Remember the rigorous puniſhment which God by St. *Peter* inflicted upon *Ananias*

*Ananias* and his wife *Saphira* for having told an untruth in a thing of leſs importance, where they concealed only part of the price of ſome goods they had ſold. *Thou haſt not*, ſaid the Apoſtle, *lied to men, but to God* *. And at theſe words they fell down dead at his feet.

Thirdly, this ſin is not only a diſobedience to the law of God, and a baſe lie; but alſo a ſin of ſacrilege, and that of the firſt magnitude. Sacrilege is one of the moſt heinous ſins that can be committed; for it is an abuſe and a profanation of a ſacred thing, or of a thing dedicated to God, and which partakes of his ſanctity. And as among holy things there are ſome more holy than others, ſo among ſacrileges there are ſome greater and more enormous than others, in proportion to the thing profaned. Now the abuſe and profanation of the ſacrament of penance by him who conceals a mortal ſin, is not only the abuſe of a holy thing, but of a thing moſt holy: becauſe the ſacraments are not only exteriorly holy, like churches, altars, and holy veſſels, which are holy becauſe they are conſecrated to holy uſes; but they contain holineſs in themſelves, in as much as they cauſe and confer it upon men. If then it be an enormous ſacrilege to profane a church, overthrow an altar, or to defile a chalice; judge what we ought to ſay of the abuſe and profanation of a ſacrament, and what a horror we ought to have of ſuch a ſacrilege. *A ſacrilege.*

Fourthly, conſider the evil you do in abuſing this ſacrament in particular, for it is inſtituted to appeaſe God's wrath, and reconcile us to him. Now in making a falſe confeſſion, you provoke God by thoſe very means he has appointed to appeaſe him: you make him your enemy at the very time that you deſire to be reſtored to his favour; and you change the ſacrament, which is a ſentence of abſolution, into a ſentence of condemnation. Wretched man! are not you afraid of falling under the reproach of the prophet: *You*, ſays he, *that turn judgment into wormwood, and forſake juſtice in the land* †. *Inſtead of appeaſing, it provokes God's anger.*

Fifthly, conſider the wicked abuſe you make of the adorable blood of the Son of God. By this ſacrament the merits of that blood are applied to us for the remiſſion of our ſins; and when the prieſt pronounces *A profanation of the blood of Chriſt.*



* Acts v. 4. † Amoſ. vi. 7.

nounces the sacred words of absolution, he pours upon us that precious blood, which *cleanseth us*, as *John* says, *from all sin**. But when you are so void of grace, as to make a deceitful confession, and having made it, permit the priest to give you absolution, you frustrate the effect of the blood of the Son of God, which falling upon a criminal and unworthy object, as you then are, is more profaned, contemned, and violated, than when the *Jews* shed it upon the earth, and audaciously trampled it under their feet. Be afraid here of that menace of the Apostle in the epistle to the Hebrews, where he says: *A man making void the law of Moses, dieth without any mercy:—how much more, do you think he deserveth worse punishments, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath esteemed the blood of the covenant unclean, with which he was sanctified, and hath offered an affront to the spirit of grace†?* Ponder well upon these three injuries; for all these you commit by a deceitful confession.

Sixthly, consider how little reason you have to perpetrate such a crime by concealing your sins in confession; "this cannot proceed "but either out of *fear* or *shame*, which are the two inseparable "companions of sin‡:" As for *fear*, what is it that you can apprehend on this occasion? If you fear being defamed, consider that you discover your sins to one man alone, so this cannot defame you; besides, he is tied by all laws both divine and human to an eternal secrecy, which he cannot violate without rendering himself worthy of death before God and man. So that there is no danger of your honour. Are you afraid to be reprimanded by your ghostly father? this sometimes hinders some people, who must be blind to commit so dreadful a sin for fear of so small an evil; to be more apprehensive of a rebuke from him, who does it merely out of charity and for your good, than of the offence against God, of being reprehended and condemned by him, of being scoffed at by Devils, and lost for evermore. Whoever makes such a choice must have lost his senses. The same is to be said of those who conceal their sins for fear of a great penance, which is yet a more inexcusable folly; yet this is too often the case among young and ignorant people. Let us now come to speak of *shame*, which is the second motive, as vain as the former.

*Fear and shame no excuses for concealment.*

It

* 1 John i. 7. † Heb. x. 28, 29. ‡ Tertul. in Apolog.

It is indeed true that ſin calls for our ſhame and confuſion, that he is not truly penitent who has not this ſhame, and that he juſtly merits the reproach God gives to a ſinner, *Thou haſt a harlot's forhead, thou wouldſt not bluſh* *. This ſhame nevertheleſs ought not to hinder any one from diſcovering all their ſins in confeſſion; that which withholds us from ſuch a declaration is not *ſhame*, but a weakneſs of mind, or rather a downright *madneſs*.

Can there be a greater madneſs than not to deſire to cure a great evil by another which is much leſs? Than to chooſe rather to damn one's ſoul for ever, than to ſave it at the expence of a momentary confuſion? What would you ſay of a criminal, who, having deſerved death, ſhould refuſe the pardon offered him by the King on condition that he would diſcover his crime in private to a judge, deputed by him? All men would certainly pronounce him guilty of exceſſive madneſs. Yet this is his caſe, who conceals any thing in confeſſion. Blind that you are, who chooſe rather to die and be loſt eternally, than confeſs your ſins to the judge, whom God has appointed to take cognizance of them, and grant a pardon if you are worthy! who will rather hide the wound that will cauſe your death, than ſhew it to the ſurgeon who will certainly cure it! who chooſe rather to be expoſed by God before a numberleſs multitude of men and angels, than to be put to a little confuſion before a ſingle man! When you conceal your ſins from men, do you think by that means to hide them from the ſight of God? You dread the ſight of man, and apprehend not that God ſhould know your ſins. Is not this to contemn and inſult God?

In reality this ſhame is not ſo painful, if we form a right judgment of it. It is ſoon over, and followed by great peace of mind and inexpreſſible comfort.

But ſuppoſe it were a thouſand times greater, conſider it is but what you have deſerved by your ſins, which if you refuſe to undergo, you muſt one day ſuffer much more; at the day of judgment, when the ſin, you now conceal in confeſſion, ſhall be expoſed before the whole world, to cover you with a confuſion which will purſue you to hell itſelf, and never have an end, according to God's own word, *I will bring an everlaſting reproach upon you, and perpetual ſhame which ſhall never be forgotten* †.

Behold the great advantages ſuch a confeſſion will bring you, the remiſſion of your ſins, a ſolid peace of conſcience, the friend-



* Jer. iii. 3. † Jer. xxiii. 40.

ſhip of God, and eternal ſalvation. O happy confuſion! It is this of which the wiſe man ſpeaks, *There is a ſhame that bringeth glory and grace;* and, *there is a ſhame that bringeth ſin* *, which is that fatal ſhame of which we are now ſpeaking.

*Remark.* In ſhort, conſider one thing to which there is no reply; that it is impoſſible you ſhould ever be ſaved without confeſſing that ſin which you have a difficulty in declaring. Perform all the good works you pleaſe of prayers, auſterity, or alms-deeds, as long as you retain any one mortal ſin in your heart without declaring it in confeſſion, there is no ſalvation for you; if you die in that ſtate, you are loſt for ever.

Do not tell me you will confeſs it hereafter; but for the preſent you cannot do it. Remember that the longer you defer it, the greater will be your ſhame and confuſion, and your averſion to diſcloſing it.

But in waiting for that day, I aſk whether in the interim you will go to confeſſion or not? if you do, then you commit ſo many ſacrileges, as will make you a thouſand times more criminal in the ſight of God, and which will draw upon your head the divine anger and vengeance. If you do not go to confeſſion, in what a diſorder and confuſion do you leave your conſcience! and to what danger do you expoſe your ſalvation! Who has told you, that that day or time will come which you propoſe to yourſelf, and that you ſhall not die before, and without confeſſion, ſince you would not confeſs when you had both time and means to do it?

In concluſion, my dear *Theotime*, if you be in that lamentable ſtate, I conjure you to look to yourſelf; to enter into yourſelf, that you may diſcover the dangerous condition to which your ſalvation is expoſed; to open your eyes, and awake from that lethargy. Conſider it is the Devil that deceives you, and raiſes in you that criminal ſhame, or that fooliſh fear, by which he deſigns your eternal damnation, where he has been too often ſucceſsful.

Call to mind that poor poſſeſſed perſon in the goſpel, whom the Devil had rendered both deaf and dumb. His diſtreſsful ſituation moved the Son of God to tears. *Looking up to heaven, he groaned, and ſaid to him: Ephpheta, that is, be opened. And immediately his ears were opened, and the ſtring of his tongue was looſed, and he ſpoke right* †. The miſeries which we conſider in the body of that poſ-

ſeſſed

* Eccli. iv. 25. † Mar. vii. 34, 35.

seſſed man, are found daily in the ſoul which the ſame evil ſpirit has poſſeſſed by ſin, and are far more dangerous. They were the ſpiritual miſeries repreſented in the body of the deaf and dumb man, which drew tears and ſighs from the Son of God. Take pity on yourſelf, and render not yourſelf unworthy of the compaſſion he has for you. Be no longer deaf to the commands he has given you to declare your ſins in confeſſion, nor to all thoſe reaſons which oblige you to it. Make a firm reſolution, and execute it readily and without delay. The Son of God will aſſiſt you in it with his grace, he will open your mouth that you may readily confeſs your ſins, you will receive a thouſand conſolations from him, and praiſing his holy name you will ſing forth, *He hath done all things well; he hath made both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to ſpeak* *.

## CHAP. IX.

*Of the preparation for confeſſion, or the examination of conſcience.*

THERE is no doubt but we ought to prepare ourſelves for confeſſion; and ſince our memory, ordinarily ſpeaking, is not ſo retentive as to keep in mind things paſt, except we apply ourſelves to recollect them; it follows, that the ſame authority which obliges us to an entire confeſſion of our ſins, obliges us alſo to a previous examen of conſcience, that ſo we may remember the three things above-mentioned, the ſpecies, the number, and the moſt remarkable circumſtances. Hence the council of *Trent* ſays, that we are obliged to declare "all our ſins which we re-"member after a diligent examen." But the difficulty is, to aſcertain what this diligence is, and how the examination is to be performed.

It is certain, that no general rule can be preſcribed for this preparation, which depends upon the circumſtances of the perſon; his capacity, time, neceſſity, and ſuch like: for there is more time required to prepare one's ſelf for a yearly than for a monthly confeſſion: thoſe who have a bad memory, or who obſerve not their daily actions, or ſeldom examine their conſciences, have need of a longer preparation than others.

We muſt follow herein that moſt judicious method which the catechiſm of the council of *Trent* preſcribes †, that is, to uſe the ſame

* Mar. vii. 37. † De Pœn. Sac. n. 62.

ſame diligence in this preparation we are wont to employ in affairs of great importance. Wherefore as upon thoſe occaſions we bring along with us a ſeriouſneſs and diligence ſuitable to the work we have undertaken, endeavouring at the ſame time not to be wanting in any thing that may help us to compaſs our deſign; we muſt do the ſame in this of confeſſion, where we are not treating about any temporal concern, but the ſecuring of our eternal ſalvation, by gaining the remiſſion of our ſins; a remiſſion which cannot be otherwiſe obtained, but by means of a good confeſſion.

*Method of examining our conſcience.*

To practiſe well this general rule, we muſt perform theſe three things.

Firſt, we muſt pray to Almighty God, and beg of him that he will vouchſafe his divine light, whereby we may ſee our ſins; this is a means which we muſt never forget, on account of the neceſſity of our being aſſiſted by the Holy Ghoſt on this occaſion. The heart of man is ſo ſecret, that he himſelf oftentimes does not know his own heart, and none but God can ſearch it to the bottom. Our conſcience is ſometimes ſo darkened and ſo obſcured, that we are not able to ſee into it, either by means of our memory or knowledge; only God by his grace and inward light, which he communicates to the ſoul, is able to diſſipate and diſperſe that darkneſs, which when he does we eaſily diſcover many ſpots which before we did not ſee; as we ſee in the rays of the ſun many things, which, in a leſs light, were hidden from our eyes. Wherefore, *Theotime*, in this preparation you muſt continually pray to God for this heavenly light. *O my God, enlighten my darkneſs* *, that I may diſcover my ſins: come, O Holy Ghoſt, and dart from heaven a ray of thy divine light.

Secondly, we muſt obſerve ſome method in ſearching out our ſins, in order not to forget any. The beſt is, to take in order the commandments of God and the church, with the ſeven deadly ſins: for ſince every ſin is a tranſgreſſion of the law of God, we cannot more eaſily recollect the ſins we have committed, than by going over his commandments, and examining upon every one by itſelf, whether we have tranſgreſſed againſt it, in what, and how. And as a perſon may offend againſt them, not only one, but many ways, it is neceſſary that we know the divers ſins which may be committed againſt each, either learning them by books which treat thereof, or by the inſtruction of ſome underſtanding perſon.

Thirdly,

* Pſalm xvii. 29.

Thirdly, the better to perform this examination of conſcience, we muſt enter into ourſelves, there to diſcover our inclinations, and predominant paſſions; the ſins we moſt uſually fall into; the occaſions of offending God, which are moſt fatal to us; the perſons we converſe with; the places we frequent; the buſineſs we have been concerned in; the particular obligations of our ſtate; the omiſſions we are guilty of; and many other ſuch things.

If you practiſe well theſe three means, *Theotime*, you comply with the diligence which God requires at your hands in this preparation; but practiſe them with ſerenity and quietneſs of mind; for diſquietude and anxiety of mind are ſo far from being a help, that they are a hinderance to confeſſion.

Remember that God requires no more than what you can perform; perform it then duly and faithfully; which when you have done, concern not yourſelf any more about your examination, but apply your thoughts to exciting in yourſelf a true contrition, and begging pardon of God for your ſins.

## CHAP. X.

### *Of the diſtinction which muſt be made between mortal and venial ſin.*

IN this examination of conſcience we muſt not only employ the memory to recollect our ſins, but alſo the judgment to diſcern the quality and grievouſneſs of them; it being certain, that all ſins are not equally grievous.

The firſt, and the moſt remarkable difference which ought to be obſerved is, that of mortal and venial.

That you may underſtand this difference rightly, you muſt know, that every ſin is a tranſgreſſion of the law of God; but with this difference, that it is ſometimes heinous, and ſometimes light. *Obſerve.*

It is heinous, when it is committed in a matter of concern with knowledge and conſent.

It is light, when it wants either all or any of theſe three conditions; that is, either when the thing itſelf is of ſmall moment, or being heinous is without ſufficient conſent; or with conſent, but without knowledge of the evil; provided it be not an affected, ſupine, or any voluntary ignorance.

The

The first is called mortal, taking its name from its effect, by reason of the death it causes in the soul, by depriving her of the grace of God, which is her life.

The second is called venial, because offending God but lightly, it is more pardonable.

A weighty transgression offending God grievously, incurs his displeasure, robs the soul of grace, makes it lose the right it had to heaven, which is the inheritance of the children of God, and renders it liable to eternal damnation.

A light transgression offending God but slightly, does not make the soul incur his absolute displeasure, but only causes some small diminution of the love which God has for her.

All that the scripture says of the grievous effects of sin is to be understood of the first transgression, as that *it bringeth forth death**: that *your iniquities have divided between you and your God*†: in a word, all that we have said above in Part II. Chap. VIII. IX. X. XI.

But when the scripture says, *A just man shall fall seven times*‡. *In many things we all offend*§. *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves*¶. It is to be understood of the second.

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## CHAP. XI.

### *Of the confession of venial sins.*

AS for venial sins, the council of *Trent* has given us two rules to follow.

*Two rules.*

The first is, that to obtain the remission of them, it is not absolutely necessary to confess them. They may be forgiven by only contrition, and a sorrow for having committed them. Because as venial sins do not destroy sanctifying grace, it is not necessary they should come under the jurisdiction of the sacrament of penance, which is instituted to restore that grace to those who have lost it.

The second rule is, that although there be no necessity, yet it is very profitable and wholsome to confess venial sins for many reasons. 1. Because by the sacrament of penance they are pardoned both with more certainty, and more grace. 2. By confessing them, we learn better to know and to correct them. 3. It is a very profitable means to avoid mortal sin, as well by reason of the grace which one receives by the sacrament; as also because he that has

* Jam. i. 15. † Isai. lix. 2. ‡ Prov. xxiv. 16. § Jam. iii. 2. ¶ 1 Joh. i. 8.

has a care to cleanſe his ſoul from ſmaller ſins, will be more ſolicitous and apprehenſive how he falls into greater, according to that ſentence of our Lord: *He that is faithful in that which is leaſt, is faithful alſo in that which is greater* *.

Now there are two things which are to be obſerved in the confeſſion of venial ſins. *Obſerve two things.*

The firſt is, therein to avoid ſcruples and anxiety of mind; a fault which many commit, who examine themſelves concerning their venial ſins with the ſame trouble or concern as if they were mortal, and ſpend ſo much time in that examination, that they think little or nothing of the means how to amend them.

The ſecond thing to be obſerved is, that when they confeſs venial ſins, they always conceive a ſorrow for having committed them, and make a reſolution to amend them. Without theſe two acts it is to no purpoſe to confeſs them; they are not forgiven, although they receive abſolution of their other ſins, for which they had contrition.

Nay, I tell you more, that if it happens that we have no other but venial ſins to confeſs, and have not ſorrow or remorſe for any of them, the abſolution would be null; and we ſhould commit a ſacrilege, becauſe the ſacrament would want one of its eſſential parts, which is contrition. This is a thing we muſt carefully beware of, as it may very eaſily happen. *Remark.*

But when I ſay we muſt reſolve, or have a will to amend our venial ſins, I ſpeak of a real, ſincere, and efficacious will, and not of a perpetual relapſe, which is too frequent.

You will ſay that this is very hard, and that it is impoſſible to be without venial ſins. To this I anſwer, and it imports you to obſerve it well, that there are three ſorts of venial ſins: 1. ſuch as proceed from weakneſs: 2. ſuch as are committed by inadvertency or ſurpriſe: 3. others we call ſins of malice, that is, which ſpring from our ſole will with a perfect knowledge; ſuch are thoſe which are committed on ſet purpoſe, or by an affected negligence, which we take no care to amend, or which proceed from ſome tie or irregular affection we bear to ſome creature. *Three ſorts of venial ſins.*

As to the ſins of weakneſs or ſurpriſe, it is true, we can never be

* Luke xvi. 10.

be totally exempt from them, and for these it sufficeth to have a good will to amend as well as we can.

But as for sins which proceed from our will, it is in our power to amend, and we are strictly obliged to it because they very much displease God, and the consequences are extremely dangerous.

These sins, *Theotime*, although they seem light, produce very ill effects. They are light, if considered each by itself; but being neglected and multiplied, they become very dangerous. They do not destroy sanctifying grace; but they dispose us very much to lose it. All together they do not make a mortal sin; but they dispose the soul to fall into it. They do not directly cause death; but they cause such weaknesses and maladies that bring death along with them, and make us fall into mortal sin. In a word, although these sins do not break that friendship which subsists betwixt God and the soul which is in the state of grace, yet by little and little they diminish it, and by this diminution charity is weakened in us; God also by degrees withdraws the graces and assistance which he vouchsafes us in all our spiritual necessities; thus having less strength, we more easily fall into mortal sin when temptation comes. Alas, *Theotime*, how many are there who have, and daily do lamentably fall into the depth of vice, the first source whereof was their neglect in correcting venial sins!

Take great care then to avoid small faults, that if you be in the state of grace, you may preserve it; if not, lest you make yourself unworthy of that favour.

## CHAP. XII.

*Of interior and exterior sins, or of the sins of thought and action.*

IT is also very necessary to be observed in confession and examination of conscience that there are sins which may be committed interiorly, or by consent in thought only, and others which proceed even to the exterior action. Thus to take pleasure in a thought of revenge, or to desire it, is an interior sin, or a sin of thought; actually to put in execution the same revenge either by word or deed, is an exterior sin, or a sin of action.

Many penitents, who are not well instructed, confess what they have said or done, but never excuse themselves of their sinful thoughts as long as they have not proceeded to the action. How-

ever

ever it is most certain, that interior sins are the first sins, and very criminal in the sight of God; exterior sins are not sins, but in as much as they proceed from the heart, that is, from the will, which is the source of the good and evil we do. It is the will that causes all the evil which is found in our actions, they are not wicked, but in as much as they are ordered and consented to by the will.

*The malice of exterior sins proceeds from the heart.*

Our Saviour says, that the heart is the fountain of our sins: *Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornication**. And the wise man says, *six things the Lord hateth, a heart that deviseth wicked plots*, &c.†. And, *perverse thoughts separate from God*‡.

Accuse yourself then of the sins of thought, when you have committed them, although you have not put them in execution; nay even when afterwards you have retracted them in your heart, for this retractation does not prevent the evil from having been consented to in thought; and although it would have been far greater if you had actually put it in execution, yet to have only desired it, ceases not to be very atrocious.

There are three degrees in these sins of thought: the first is complacency, the second desire, and the third the resolution.

*Three degrees in sins of thought.*

Complacency in an evil thought, is a mortal sin, if it be voluntary, and if the thing one thinks on be in itself a mortal sin; as an impure action, a severe revenge, or the like.

The desire, which frequently follows the complacency, is also a mortal sin in the two circumstances above-mentioned, when it tends voluntarily to a thing mortally evil. We see it is forbidden by the two last commandments of the law of God. Now if you would know what is meant by a desire: "A desire is a conditional will, "or a will to do the evil if it lay in our power, and if we had an "opportunity."

The resolution to do the evil is also a mortal sin, and greater than the other two, and must be confessed, although it were not put in execution, and even although we have retracted and changed our resolution, as we said before.

CHAP.

* Mat. xv. 19. † Prov. vi. 16, 18. ‡ Wisd. i. 3.

## CHAP. XIII.

### *Of sins of commission and omission.*

THIS difference of sins is also very necessary to be known, as well for confession, as for the conduct of a Christian life.

Sins that consist in action are easily known, confessed, and avoided; but sins of omission are hardly understood, seldom confessed, and scarcely avoided; they arise from a neglect of those duties which we are obliged to perform.

*Sins of omission as great as those of commission.*

Yet this sin is often as great as that of commission: we shall be equally damned for not doing that which we are obliged to do, as for committing the evil that is forbidden us. The law of God, *Theotime*, whereof sin is a transgression, does not only forbid evil, but also commands good. Some of its precepts are negative, and forbid evil, as those, *Thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal.* Others are conceived in positive terms, and command some good; as those, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God: Keep holy the sabbath day.*

Each commandment in reality is both positive and negative: for those which command a good, forbid the opposite evil; and those that prohibit an evil, command the contrary good. For example, the precept which commands us to love God, forbids us to do any thing that displeases him: and the commandment that prohibits robbing, obliges making restitution of what is unjustly taken away; and thus of others. There is no commandment against which one may not sin both by commission and omission.

Hence there is an indispensable obligation to examine ourselves upon the sins of omission, as well as commission; we must accuse ourselves not only of the evil actions we have done, but also of the duties we have left undone.

In the examination which we shall give you hereafter, we shall put down the sins of omission together with the sins of commission against each commandment.

Above all we must carefully examine these sins of omission, when we search into the sins which belong to our particular state of life. Each state and condition has peculiar obligations annexed to it, and to which we are strictly bound either by law, or by covenant, or by oath, or by the very nature of the calling. Many Christians are guilty of considerable omissions, of their respective duties, which are highly criminal, though they are not always observed

obſerved as they ſhould be, by thoſe who often fall into them. Hence at the hour of death many ſins will be brought to light, which careleſs ſouls in the time of this life but little apprehended, and ſo continued till death in the guilt of them.

## CHAP. XIV.

### *Of the ſins of ignorance, frailty, and malice.*

I ADD here this diſtinction of ſins, becauſe it conduces very much to make us underſtand the quality of them, and how to form a better judgment of their enormity.

This diſtinction ſprings from the nature of ſin, which is a *voluntary*, and *free* action: as it is *voluntary*, it muſt be performed *knowingly*: as it is *free*, it muſt be done in ſuch a manner, *that the will might not have done it.* Knowledge is hindered by ignorance; *the power of not doing it*, is hindered by paſſions, which carry the will on to do evil, or withdraw it from good: I ſay hindered, that is, either diminiſhed, or totally taken away. When knowledge is wanting, it is a ſin of *ignorance*; when the power of not doing is incumbered by paſſion, it is a ſin of *frailty*; but when we are free both from the one and the other, paſſion as well as ignorance, then it is a ſin which proceeds from the will alone, and is called a ſin of *malice*, that is, of the will acting with full knowledge, and of her own accord, without being puſhed on or clogged by any paſſion.

*No ſin without knowledge, and a power of not ſinning.*

You ſhould be well inſtructed in this point, *Theotime*, becauſe the greateſt part of the world excuſe their ſins either upon account of their ignorance, or weakneſs. It is true, there is ſometimes ignorance or paſſion in their ſins, but they muſt not excuſe themſelves for that. I am about to convince you that neither ignorance nor paſſion do always leſſen them, but that the greateſt part of their ſins are ſins of malice.

### ARTICLE I.

#### *Of the ſins of ignorance.*

A SIN of ignorance is what we commit for want of ſufficient knowledge either of the action that we perform, or of the evil which there is in ſuch an action.

Ignorance of the action, is called ignorance of the fact. Ignorance of the evil which is in the action, is called ignorance of the law; of which we may be ignorant two ways, either totally, or in part: totally, when we believe there is no ill in the action; in part, when we believe indeed there is some, but not so much evil, as in effect there is. We may be subject to ignorance, either by our fault and our will, or without any fault or will on our side.

It happens by our fault, when we are willing to be ignorant of a thing, whether expresly and on set purpose endeavouring to avoid information; or implicitly by a supine negligence, when careless about learning what we ought to know.

It happens without any fault of ours, when there is neither an expres will, nor any considerable negligence on our part, and it is not our fault that we are not instructed in it.

*What ignorance removes or lessens guilt.*

This being supposed, it is easy to tell when ignorance lessens the sin, when it takes it away totally, and when not at all.

First, when such ignorance does not proceed at all from our fault, either directly or indirectly, it is certain it takes away the sin totally, and the action we do is not a sin; because there is no sin without a will, and there is no will where there is no knowledge. Thus when *Noah* was intoxicated with wine, his excess in drink was not a sin, because he neither did nor could know its strength.

Secondly, when ignorance proceeds from our fault by an expres will, or gros negligence, it neither takes away, nor even lessens the sin; on the contrary, it rather encreases the guilt. Because he that desires the cause, desires also the effect. If then I desire, or am not unwilling to be ignorant of the evil that is in an action, and it happens by that ignorance that I sin more freely, and without remorse, I am the voluntary cause of the sin, the enormity of which I would not know. Such was the ignorance of the unchaste old men in the history of *Susanna*, of whom it is said, *That they cast down their eyes, that they might not see heaven, nor remember the judgments of God**. Such is the ignorance of those that will not be instructed in what they ought to know, nor admonished of the evil they do, and who will not understand that they may do well†.

Thirdly,

* Dan. xiii. 9. † Psal. xxxv. 4.

Thirdly, as the total ignorance of the evil of an action takes away all the ſin, when it does not proceed from our fault; ſo the ignorance of part of the evil which is in a ſin takes away part of its guilt, that is, leſſens the ſin: this is to be underſtood of that ignorance which does not proceed from our fault, and when it was not in our power to be better inſtructed. Such is the ignorance of young people when they firſt fall into ſins of impurity. They know well enough that they are ſins, as appears by the doubts they have in their conſcience, and by the ſhame they have to confeſs them: but they do not underſtand that their malignity is ſo great as in reality they are, until they are inſtructed; till then their ſins are not ſo great, although they are almoſt always mortal ſins. This ſhows the neceſſity of their being well inſtructed concerning ſuch ſins, that they may conceive a due horror, and avoid them to the utmoſt of their power.

## ARTICLE II.

### *Of ſins of frailty.*

THE ſins of frailty are thoſe which proceed from the will moved by ſome paſſion.

Paſſions are actions of the ſenſitive appetite, which is an inferior part of the ſoul, and moves towards things forbidden by the law of God; ſuch are love, hatred, ſadneſs, fear, anger. Some puſh on the ſoul to do what is forbidden, as love, hatred, joy, choler; others withdraw it from doing the good which is commanded, as fear, ſadneſs, deſpair; thoſe cauſe ſins of action, theſe ſins of omiſſion.

Paſſions diminiſh the liberty of the will, becauſe being puſhed on, or reſtrained by other cauſes than by herſelf, ſhe has not her own dominion over that action, either to do, or not do what ſhe wills. Beſides, theſe paſſions diminiſh alſo the judgment, hindering the underſtanding, which guides the will, from judging of things ſo clearly as otherwiſe it would.

They diminiſh by conſequence the ſin which is found in an action or omiſſion, and this differently; ſometimes leſs, ſometimes more, and ſometimes totally; at other times ſo far from diminiſhing, they rather encreaſe it.

*When paſſions diminiſh or take away the guilt of ſin.*

They diminiſh ſometimes but little, when they are but light, and the will may eaſily overcome them.

They diminiſh the ſin much, when they are ſtrong and violent, becauſe for that time they notoriouſly diminiſh the judgment and liberty; however, as long as they leave man the knowledge of the evil which he does, the ſin continues ſtill in ſome degree.

They totally take away the ſin, when they are ſo violent, that they totally cloud the reaſon, ſo that one does not perceive at all that there is a ſin, which never happens but in the firſt motions of paſſion, which being a little appeaſed, the mind returns to itſelf, and knows what it has done, and from thence-forward one ſins if he continues in his paſſion.

But paſſions do not at all diminiſh the ſin when they are voluntary, and when they are wilfully raiſed, entertained, or cheriſhed, as it happens too often, in which caſe they are not ſins of frailty, but of malice.

## ARTICLE III.

### *Of ſins of malice.*

BY ſins of malice we do not underſtand here, ſins which are maliciouſly committed, whether purely to diſpleaſe God, or for the mere pleaſure which one takes in doing ill: theſe ſins are rather ſins of Devils than men. Thoſe who are ſo unfortunate as to commit ſuch ſins, begin in this world to live the life of Devils, which God often puniſhes alſo with the puniſhment of Devils, which are obſtinacy and impenitence. Theſe are the ſins which our Saviour calls *Sins againſt the Holy Ghoſt*, which are *neither forgiven in this world nor the next* *.

*Sins of malice explained.*

Sins of malice, whereof I ſpeak in this place, are thoſe which are committed without ignorance, and without paſſion, that is, with full knowledge and entire liberty. They are called ſins of malice, becauſe being committed neither out of ignorance nor paſſion, they proceed only from the evil inclination of the will, which ſcruples not to offend God, provided it can compaſs the enjoyment of its pleaſures, or other ſenſible content which it ſeeks in ſin.

Theſe

* Mat. xii. 32.

These sins are very great, and highly displeasing in the sight of God, having nothing to excuse them, as the two former have. These we must confess very exactly, specifying the circumstance, that we committed them with full knowledge and on set purpose. It is also necessary that we undergo some severe penance for them.

As these sins are great, they ought to be rare and unheard of, although unhappily they are too common amongst Christians. If the lives of men were nicely searched into, the greatest part of their sins would be found to be sins of malice, in the sense we have used the word, that is, sins proceeding neither from ignorance nor passion.

For as to ignorance, though much of it is found among the ordinary sins of men, and for that reason it is said, that every man that sins is ignorant: how often does it happen, that their ignorance is voluntary? They purposely affect to be ignorant; they wish to be ignorant of that which they are obliged to know; they are unwilling to be instructed; they fear to look too narrowly into their own actions, and to be obliged to do good from the knowledge they shall have of it. Is not this deliberately to consent to the sin, and out of malice? For this reason they shun every means of instruction, as reading books and sermons, or among preachers they dislike those that reprehend vice; they shun the most able spiritual guides, and seek the less understanding, and most indulgent; they consult no one concerning their doubts of conscience; at least they do not unfold their interior with candour and sincerity; they seek after favourable answers to indulge themselves in remiss practices, and false opinions; thus they frame a specious conscience, to sin with more liberty. What is this but wilfully to run into a precipice, and shut their eyes that they may cast themselves headlong the more readily, and without fear? Will any one pretend, that an action proceeding from such a wilful ignorance, is not a sin of malice, when persons refuse to know the evil, that they may be under less restraint?

As for passions, we must say the same of them as of ignorance, they diminish sin when they are not voluntary; but when we purposely seek them, or industriously cherish or encrease them, these are not sins of passion, but of malice, since they are deliberate effects of a will running on to wickedness, and employing its passion as a means of encreasing its pleasure. Now how common is this among men! He that has a desire of revenge, does he not

endeavour to nouriſh his hatred and indignation againſt his enemy? He ſpeaks againſt him on all occaſions, and is pleaſed with hearing others ſpeak againſt him.

He whoſe heart is poſſeſt with impure love does all he can to indulge it; he applies his care and thoughts that way; all his ſenſes are employed therein, as his eyes, ears, tongue, touch; he lets no opportunities ſlip; he ſearches after them with much care and ſolicitude; he follows all the motions of his paſſion without oppoſition, or putting the leaſt reſtraint upon himſelf. What is ſinning on ſet purpoſe, and with an affected malice, if this be not? Thus running over the greateſt part of the ſins of men, we ſhall find that they principally ſpring from the will, and men are vitious becauſe they have a mind to be ſo.

Hence beware, *Theotime*, of flattering yourſelf in your ſins becauſe you are young. Plead neither the ignorance of your youth, nor the violence of your paſſions as an excuſe for your guilt; for remember that you make your ignorance and paſſion voluntary, becauſe you will not learn the truths you ought to know, nor ſearch after the means of reſtraining or conquering your paſſions; ſo that your ſins proceed from the inclination you have to ill, which you will not correct, and thus the greateſt part of your ſins are ſins of malice, rather than ſins of paſſion or ignorance.

## ARTICLE IV.

### *Of ſins which ſpring from a vitious habit.*

I ADD here this fourth article, foraſmuch as next to ignorance and paſſion, there is another cauſe which draws the will to ſin, and ſeems to diminiſh it, *viz.* a vitious habit, that is, an inclination or eaſineſs to fall into a ſin, contracted by often repeated acts of the ſame ſin; for it is the property of acts to produce ſuitable habits.

When this habit is become ſtrong and inveterate, it cauſes us to fall into ſin without either ignorance or paſſion; witneſs thoſe who ſwear upon all occaſions, who have their mind always full of evil thoughts, who have nothing in their mouth but immodeſt words, and ſo of others.

This inclination is ſometimes ſo great, that it draws after it a kind of neceſſity to fall into evil: as St. *Auguſtine* ſays in his confeſſions, deploring the unfortunate experience he had of it.

" The

"The will, (says he) when once depraved, begets an inclination "to ill: the inclination produces a habit; a habit when not re- "sisted becomes a necessity *." Yet this necessity does not take away the sin, because it does not take away the liberty of the will, which is always mistress of her habit, and which by means of grace may overcome it. If you ask whether a vitious habit lessens the sin? I answer, that of itself it does not, because it was freely contracted by the will, and it is in her power to overcome it.

Hence to judge whether a vitious habit diminishes the sin, we must consider how the will is affected in respect of the habit, that is, whether she be displeased, whether she be afflicted, whether she make any endeavours to correct herself, and to be freed from it. For in this case the habit without doubt lessens the sin, and when one falls therein, he is more excusable in the sight of God; and if the sin be mortal, it is less grievous than if it were committed without habit. *When an ill habit lessens guilt.*

But if he who has contracted a vitious habit does not strive to amend, his sins are nothing less for being committed through a habit. Then they are no more sins of frailty, but become sins of malice, because he willingly nourishes the cause that produces them. And as he does not earnestly desire to correct his vitious habit, he is reasonably supposed to consent to all the sins that spring from thence.

Take great notice of this rule, *Theotime*, that you may be able to judge aright of the quality of the sins which you commit by habit, and do not easily excuse yourself upon this account. They frequently proceed from your own fault and will.

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## CHAP. XV.

### *Of sins that are committed through error or doubt.*

THESE also are two other sources of sin, necessary to be known and examined into, by reason of the great number of sins that spring from them.

We here call that an error, when one believes there is a sin in the action or omission, when in reality there is none, or that it is a mortal, when it is but a venial sin.



* Lib. 8. cap. 5.

*An action becomes sinful by a false judgment.*

If it be asked, whether an action or omission, performed in such error is a sin? Without doubt it is, and ought to be confessed, and a diligent care must be had for the future, in regard to the like occasions. Because sin consists in the will, and the will acts not but as it is guided by the judgment. When the judgment proposes a thing as evil, whether it be an action or omission, if the will embraces it, she consents to it as evil, in as much as she knows it in no other light, and sins as if the thing were evil in effect; because the sin does not consist in the effect, but in the affection. This is the reason why we say that an erroneous conscience obliges, that is, when we believe that it is ill to do, or omit an action, we are obliged to follow that belief, although false, till such time as we shall be informed of the truth.

Mark this well, dear *Theotime*, for two reasons. First, that you may avoid sinning thus by error, which happens but too often to young people, who believe frequently that actions or omissions are sins, when they are not, and who nevertheless commit them. You ought steadfastly to follow this rule, never to perform an action or omission which you believe to be a sin.

Secondly, that you may apply this truth to your confession, in which you ought to examine into the sins you have committed through error. In order to judge of the sin you have committed, whether action or omission, do not only examine whether it were a mortal sin in itself or not; but, whether you did not believe it was a mortal sin: for then it must be confessed as if it were a mortal sin.

Perhaps you will draw from hence a consequence in your own favour. If then, you will say, I judge either an action or omission to be lawful, and exempt from sin, although in effect it be not; it follows, that I shall not sin at all in committing it.

I answer, that this is sometimes true, and sometimes otherwise. It is true, when this erroneous judgment proceeds from an innocent ignorance, or where there was no fault at all of ours, or that it was not in our power to be better instructed: but if this error arises from a culpable ignorance, and because we would not be better informed, as it often happens; in this case it does not at all excuse the sin, as it is said above, Chap. XIV. Art. I.

With

With respect to doubt, this also is very often the cause of sin, and it concerns us to know it. We call that a doubt, when one is uncertain whether an action or omission be a sin or not. This doubt is either great or small, or betwixt both: great, when it inclines the judgment to determine that it is a sin: small, when it rather resolves that it is not: mean or betwixt both, when it hangs in suspense, and we know not on which side to incline the balance: hence it is easy to tell when a doubt makes an action sinful, and when not. *When doubt makes an action sinful.*

A very strong doubt makes an action, or omission a sin, because it is equivalent to a judgment.

A light doubt does not make a thing to be a sin, in as much as it does not at all destroy the contrary belief, by which one thinks there is no sin in it.

As for the doubt which is in the middle betwixt these two, and which leaves the judgment in a total uncertainty, neither being able to affirm nor deny, it is so far from excusing from sin, that he, who in this doubt resolves to do an action or omission, which he doubts whether it be a mortal sin or not, sins mortally: the reason is, because acting under that formal doubt, he is supposed to desire it, such as it might be in itself, and as it might be evil, he was resolved to do it in case it were so. This deserves to be carefully remembered.

## CHAP. XVI.

### *Of the sins which we commit in others.*

WE are not only guilty of those sins which we commit by ourselves, but also of those which we commit by others, that is, of sins which others commit through our fault.

These sins are often very heinous, and of fatal consequence. These are those of which *David* speaks, when he says: *Cleanse me, O Lord, from my hidden sins, and pardon thy servant from those which I commit in others**. Yet there is nothing more common among men, nor of which they take less care, for want of sufficient knowledge or understanding of the different ways by which one may concur to another's sin. Wherefore I shall here treat of them briefly.

To

* Psal. xviii. 13.

*How we become guilty of another person's sin.*

To sin by another, is to be the voluntary and faulty cause of the sin which another commits. I say, voluntary and faulty, because if we are the cause of the sin of another, without our fault, we do not sin.

Now we may be the cause of the sin of another two ways, positively and negatively, by action or by omission. By action, when we do or say something which induces our neighbour to sin. By omission, when we fail to say or do something that might hinder our neighbour from offending God.

I said when we do or say, to denote two ways whereby we may cause sin in another positively, *viz.* by our actions and by our words. By our actions, which give ill example to our neighbour, or an occasion to offend God. By words, which induce others to sin.

The first way is called the sin of scandal; the second an inducement to evil. The first happens as often as we do any action, which is either wicked, or esteemed so, when we know, or ought to know, that it will be the cause of our neighbour offending God.

The second happens different ways, *viz.* by teaching, commanding, concealing, and soliciting to sin by entreaties, threats, *&c.*

The one and the other of these ways are very common among men, and probably are the cause of the greatest part of those sins which are daily committed. The Son of God says: *Wo to the world because of scandals. It is indeed necessary that scandals come: nevertheless wo to that man by whom scandal cometh**. His meaning is; it is a great misfortune, that the world should be filled with scandals, and a most lamentable case for him who causes the scandal; *it were better for a man to have a mill-stone tied to his neck, and cast into the bottom of the sea, than to give scandal* to his neighbour, that is, than to make him fall into sin.

Besides this way of positively contributing to the sin of another by actions or words, there is another, which we may call negative, which happens when any one refrains from doing or saying something which might hinder our neighbour from offending God. For not to hinder sin when we may, is to be the cause of the sin of another. This happens in many cases, of which we shall discourse hereafter at the end of the examen of sins.

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* Mat. xviii. 7.

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# TABLE of SINS,

*Which may ſerve for an explanation of the Ten Commandments, the chief precepts of the church, and the ſeven deadly ſins: or for an examination of conſcience proper for a general confeſſion.*

SIN being a tranſgreſſion againſt the law of God, it follows, that to underſtand well in what we have ſinned, we muſt firſt know what God commands and what he forbids by each commandment: therefore to examine our conſcience rightly, it is neceſſary to go through the commandments as they ſtand in order, and ſee whether and how many ways we have tranſgreſſed them.

## *The* FIRST COMMANDMENT.

*I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the houſe of bondage. Thou ſhalt not have ſtrange gods before me. Thou ſhalt not make to thyſelf a graven thing, nor the likeneſs of any thing that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, nor of thoſe things that are in the waters under the earth. Thou ſhalt not adore them, nor ſerve* them *.

*The Firſt Commandment is broken, firſt, by Sins againſt Faith: as,*

1. BY being ignorant of the principal myſteries of chriſtianity, or of the creed, of the commandments of God, of the precepts of the church, or of the ſacraments. 2. By wilfully doubting or obſtinately erring in any point of faith. 3. By denying our religion in word or deed; by going to the churches or meetings of heretics, ſo as to join any way with them in their worſhip or to give ſcandal. By having delayed embracing the true faith, for human reſpects, intereſt, fear, &c. 4. By favouring heretics, or wicked men, in ſupporting and approving what they do; or making cloſe connections with ſuch, as will probably hinder you from the practice of your religion. 5. By reading their books either with pleaſure or danger. 6. By examining with curioſity divine myſteries and ſecrets of providence by pure human reaſon. 7. By contemning or deriding holy things, or profaning the ſacraments. 8. By abuſing the words of holy ſcripture, by applying them to wicked or profane ſenſes, making them ſerve for jeſts, or other ill uſes. 9. By deſiring to know things to come, which belongs

* Exodus xx. 2, 3, 4, 5.

longs to God only; or things paſt or preſent, which are hid from us; and by employing for this end unlawful means, as *magicians*, *fortune-tellers*, or other ſuperſtitious inventions. 10. By giving credit to dreams, or making ſuperſtitious obſervations; by employing prayers or ſacred things to ill uſes; by uſing charms, or other inventions to make perſons fall in love with us, to cure diſeaſes, or to do any damage to our neighbour or his goods.

*Secondly, by Sins againſt Hope, as,*

1. By diſtruſting in the mercies of God, or deſpairing of pardon of one's ſins. 2. By preſuming on God's goodneſs without any concern of amendment. 3. By deferring one's converſion or repentance till the end of life. 4. By expoſing one's ſelf to any danger of offending God, either by company, reading, or otherways, which is called tempting God. 5. By expoſing one's ſelf without neceſſity to ſome corporal danger, as ſickneſs, wounds, or death. 6. By neglecting the remedies God has appointed in theſe dangers, as of phyſic for the body, prayer and the ſacraments for the ſoul.

*Thirdly, by Sins againſt Charity: as,*

1. By not loving God above all things, but rather chuſing wilfully to offend him, than ſuffer ſome loſs, as to honours, riches, &c. 2. By preferring the love of men before the love of *God*; ſo as to offend *God* for fear of diſpleaſing men, or of being jeered or ſlighted. 3. By omitting a duty for ſhame, or other temporal reſpect. 4. By thinking ſeldom of God; by being aſhamed to ſpeak of him; by not hearkening to his inſpirations; by forgetting his benefits, or neglecting to give him thanks.

*Fourthly, by Sins againſt the Virtue of Religion; as,*

1. By not adoring God, or praying to him; or doing it very ſeldom. 2. By praying without attention, and with wilful diſtractions. 3. By being wanting in our reſpect to God in time of prayer; by talking in holy places, and being there without due modeſty and gravity, either in looks, words, or actions.

*Fifthly, by Sins againſt the Care we are bound to have of our own ſalvation; as,*

1. By the love of idleneſs, in chuſing rather to do nothing than be employed in any commendable exerciſe; which is a ſin that carries

carries a train of many others after it. 2. By being too ſolicitous in temporal concerns, and neglecting the means of ſalvation. 3. By deferring amendment of life, or immediately deſiſting after having begun it. 4. By neglecting the means of ſalvation; as the ſacraments, prayers, good works, or uſing them without devotion. 5. By receiving any ſacrament without due preparation or in mortal ſin.

## SECOND COMMANDMENT.

*Thou ſhalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.*

*The Second Commandment is broken,*

1. BY the ill cuſtom of taking God's name in vain. 2. By ſwearing what one knows or doubts to be falſe. 3. By ſwearing what is unjuſt, or prejudicial to others. N. B. When one ſwears to do an evil thing, the oath does not oblige; but it was a mortal ſin to ſwear, and it would be another to fulfil that oath. 4. By ſwearing without neceſſity, though the thing be true and juſt. 5. By blaſpheming God, or holy things. It is blaſphemy to vilify Almighty God, either by denying him ſome perfection, or by attributing to him what is unworthy of him. It is alſo a kind of blaſphemy to ſwear by the death of God, by his blood, by his wounds, when ſuch words are uttered with contempt or reproach. 6. By curſing one's ſelf, or others, or any of God's creatures, or taking pleaſure in hearing others ſwear or curſe, or provoking them to it; 7. or not reprehending them when we may and ought. 8. By making a vow to do what is impoſſible to fulfil; or to do what is evil or diſpleaſing to God; or to do what one never intends to perform. 9. By breaking lawful vows, or deferring to fulfil them without juſt cauſe.

## THIRD COMMANDMENT.

*Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath Day.*

*The Third Commandment is broken,*

1. BY doing ſervile works on the *Sunday*, or cauſing others to do the like, without a conſiderable neceſſity. 2. By employing a conſiderable part of the Sunday in temporal affairs, as thoſe of merchants, advocates, ſolicitors, *&c.* 3. By profaning *Sundays*, ſpending them in idleneſs, gaming, dances, feaſting, and other recreations. 4. By not ſanctifying a conſiderable part of

theſe

theſe days in reading good books, praying, and other religious duties, or not taking care that thoſe under your charge do the like.

## FOURTH COMMANDMENT.

*Honour thy father and thy mother.*

*The Fourth Commandment is broken,*

I. BY children not giving due reſpect to their parents; or by deſpiſing them, either in their heart or actions. 2. By not loving them, but wiſhing their death, or other misfortunes; and forſaking them in their neceſſities. 3. By not obeying them, or not doing it readily; or by obeying them in things unlawful. 4. By miſemploying the time allotted to ſtudies, or to the learning of ſome trade or profeſſion; or by cauſing others to be idle or remiſs. 5. By ſquandering what parents allowed for prudent uſe. 6. By ſlighting their reprehenſions, and reſiſting their corrections. 7. By putting them into paſſion, and not taking care to pacify them. 8. By not executing their laſt will and teſtament, or delaying to do it.

II. By ſervants and other inferiors. 1. In diſobeying their maſters, or other lawful ſuperiors, civil, or eccleſiaſtical. 2. By failing in their truſt, or diligence that is required at their hands. 3. By neglecting the reaſonable and juſt intereſt of their maſter. 4. By letting their maſter ſuffer in any kind, through their ſloth, neglect, &c. 5. By obeying them in things unlawful, as lying, ſwearing, ſtealing, *&c.*

III. By parents in not performing their duty towards their children. 1. In not loving them, and ſupplying them in their corporal neceſſities. 2. In not being careful of their ſalvation. 3. In not correcting them when they ſtand in need; in flattering them in their paſſions; or indulging them in their evil inclination. 4. In being too ſevere to them. 5. In not giving them good example. 6. In forcing them to the choice of their ſtate of life.

IV. By maſters, and other ſuperiors. 1. In not having due care of their ſervants, or thoſe entruſted to their charge, as to their life and converſation. 2. In not being watchful over them, to reprehend their faults; make them ſay their prayers; go to maſs on *Sundays* and holidays; frequent the ſacraments. 3. In commanding them to do ſome evil. 4. In treating them too rudely and injuriouſly. 5. In not duly paying them their wages.

FIFTH

## FIFTH COMMANDMENT.

*Thou ſhalt not kill.*

*The Fifth Commandment is broken,*

1. BY anger, quarrelling, threatening, by injurious or reproachful words or actions againſt our neighbours. 2. By revenge, or deliberate thoughts or deſires of revenge. 3. By provoking, ſtriking, challenging, wounding, or being the cauſe of another's death. 4. By cauſing or adviſing an abortion. 5. By keeping ill-will, bearing malice, refuſing to ſalute, or ſpeak to any neighbour out of hatred or averſion, or refuſing to be reconciled. 6. By indulging our pleaſures to the impairing of our health.

## SIXTH COMMANDMENT.

*Thou ſhalt not commit adultery.*

*The Sixth Commandment is broken,*

I. BY the *hearing*. 1. In willingly giving ear to immodeſt words, diſcourſes, ſongs. 2. By taking pleaſure therein. 3. By not hindering or diſcouraging them, when one may. 4. By not avoiding the company of thoſe that ſpeak them.

II. By the *ſight*. 1. In looking on immodeſt objects, as on nakedneſs and diſhoneſt pictures, figures, *&c.* 2. In reading diſhoneſt books; in keeping them; lending them to others; or neglecting to ſuppreſs them when one may.

III. By the *tongue*. 1. ſpeaking immodeſt words, or ſuch as bearing a double ſenſe are apt to create impure thoughts in others. 2. In relating wanton ſtories, or wicked actions of himſelf or others. 3. By ſinging unchaſte ſongs, or reciting immodeſt verſes. 4. By ſoliciting others to any ſort of impurity.

IV. By the *touch*, in uſing indecent actions, or touching himſelf or others immodeſtly.

V. By *thoughts*. 1. By willingly, and with delight, entertaining impure thoughts. 2. Deſiring to commit the ſins thought on. 3. In reſolving to commit them.

VI. By *immodeſt actions*. 1. In occaſioning pollution in himſelf or others. 2. In committing the ſin of diſhoneſty, and whether effected by ſoliciting, ſeducing with promiſes, or forcing: and whether it be fornication, adultery or inceſt. 3. In ſins againſt

nature.

nature. Married persons ought to examine whether they have not abused the liberty of their state.

## SEVENTH COMMANDMENT.

*Thou shalt not steal.*

*The Seventh Commandment is broken,*

1. BY taking another's goods; the sin encreasing in proportion to their value. 2. By retaining what one knows belongs to another; or by appropriating to one's self things found without seeking after the owner. 3. By denying one's debts, or wilfully delaying the payment, to the prejudice of a neighbour. 4. By making unjust bargains or contracts; and in this every trade and profession ought to make a strict enquiry. 5. By causing any damage to a neighbour. 6. By putting off false and not current money. 7. By desiring another's goods. 8. By not giving alms when necessity requires. 9. By simony. 10. By usury. All injustice requires an adequate reparation.

## EIGHT COMMANDMENT.

*Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.*

*The Eight Commandment is broken,*

1. BY witnessing what is false, especially if the charge be heinous; or by defending a false accusation, as in lawyers and solicitors; or by condemning the innocent, or discharging the guilty, as in judges and arbitrators. 2. By detraction, either in our own mind, by ill-grounded suspicion, or rash judgment, or in uttering our sentiments, by laying something false to another's charge, or reporting for truth what is only doubtful, or revealing something yet secret and unknown, though true, in prejudice to some third person. In this sin we must notice whether it was done out of lightness and indiscretion, or out of malice and ill-will; and whether in presence of many persons, and whether in a matter of great concern. 3. By lying, which is speaking a thing we judge to be otherwise than we say. It should be observed whether one has a custom of it, or does it to the considerable prejudice of others. 4. By hypocrisy, which is a lie in action.

NINTH

NINTH COMMANDMENT.

*Thou ſhalt not covet thy neighbour's wife.*

TENTH COMMANDMENT.

*Thou ſhalt not covet thy neighbour's goods.*

*The Ninth and Tenth Commandments are broken,*

BY all unlawful and wilful deſires in regard of impurity and theft; which are already ſet down in the ſixth and ſeventh commandments.

*The precepts of the Church are broken,*

1. BY not keeping certain appointed days holy; or by doing, or cauſing others to do unneceſſary ſervile work thereon: or by omitting to hear maſs on a Sunday or a holiday, or not hearing it with attention and devotion. 2. By not obſerving the commanded days of abſtinence and faſting. 3. By not confeſſing our ſins to our paſtor at leaſt once a year; or by rendering our yearly confeſſion invalid for want of due diſpoſitions. 4. By not receiving the Bleſſed Sacrament at Eaſter, or thereabouts; or making our Eaſter-communion Sacrilegious. 5. By not paying tythes to our paſtor. 6. By *ſolemnizing* marriage at forbidden times; or by marrying within the prohibited degrees of kindred, or without witneſſes.

*Of the Seven deadly Sins.*

*The Sins of* Pride *are,*

1. IN taking pleaſure in thinking too well of one's ſelf, and valuing himſelf above deſert. 2. In publiſhing what he eſteems good in himſelf, that he may be eſteemed by others. 3. In arrogance, by attributing to himſelf the goods he has not. 4. In preſumption and ambition, by confiding too much in his own ſtrength, conceiting himſelf capable of things above him, and raſhly ſeeking them. 5. In contempt of others, by reaſon of the good opinion one has of himſelf; and when one ſhews this contempt by words or actions, and by being ſevere, and exacting on inferiors. 6. In want of due ſubmiſſion to ſuperiors, by diſobeying them, blaming their conduct, or murmuring againſt them. 7. In not acknowledging his faults; or when confeſſing the fact, one maintains he has done well, or at leaſt alledges falſe excuſes. 8. In contempt of admonitions and corrections. 9. In obſtinacy in one's own opi-

nion. 10. In discord. 11. In hypocrisy. 12. In curiosity, which inclines us to know things prejudicial to our salvation. 13. In ingratitude for God's benefits.

The sins of *covetousness*, *luxury*, and *sloth*, have been examined above, in the first, sixth, and seventh commandments.

*The Sins of* Gluttony, *are*,

In eating or drinking to excess, as far as they are prejudicial, either to our health or our reason, or any way scandalous, or of ill example to others.

*The Sins of* Envy, *are*,

1. Trouble at the good success of one's neighbour, or when one endeavours or wishes to do him a diskindness, or speaks often against him, to diminish the esteem others have of him, or to create in them an ill opinion of him. 2. When one rejoices at his neighbour's harm.

*The Sins of* Anger, *are*,

1. Not to endure any thing contrary to our inclinations. 2. To suffer one's self to be carried away by the motions of wrath, against those that give us any trouble. 3. To proceed to quarrels, injurious language, oaths, curses, threats; to revenge one's self or to desire and wish to be in a capacity of doing it. 4. Not to pardon injuries, or be reconciled to enemies, or with such of our neighbours, with whom one has had some misunderstanding, or falling out.

*The Examination of sins, which one commits in the person of another.*

1. IN doing an evil action, or what is esteemed to be so, in the presence of others; and more especially, if it be done with a design to stir up others to sin. 2. By compelling them to evil, by some force. 3. In giving aid or assistance towards a wicked action, by money or otherwise. 4. In harbouring or concealing bad people, that they may not be discovered or punished. 5. In sharing in any evil, whether it be in the action itself, or in the profit arising. 6. In not hindering evil when one may. 7. By teaching one evil which he knew not before. 8. By commanding, counselling, soliciting, threatening, or otherwise provoking another to ill. 9. By approving evil actions, and praising them who do them.

them. 10. By bragging of ſins he has committed, or of ſuch as he never did. 11. By ſlighting the good deeds of others, or any ways expoſing them to ſcoffing or ſcorn. 12. By ſowing diſcord amongſt others, either by falſe or true reports; and by endeavouring to keep up a miſunderſtanding amongſt them. 13. By not inſtructing thoſe under one's care; nor reprehending or chaſtiſing them when neceſſity requires, but permitting them to live as they pleaſe. 14. By not giving fraternal correction, and charitable admonitions for the preventing of evil.

N. B. The circumſtance of ſcandal, is generally found in all ſins that are known to others.

There are, beſides theſe, particular ſins belonging to every ſtate, trade, profeſſion, and calling, upon which every one ought to bring himſelf to an account, and ſee how far he has been wanting in any part of his duty. And every one ſhould remember that no *cuſtom* or *common practice*, how general ſoever, can juſtify what the law of God forbids. Hence cunningly over-reaching our neighbour is not ſuperiority of wiſdom, but injuſtice; and hence knowingly to ſell damaged wares as unhurt; to pilfer what the ſufferers would not allow; and other ſecret practices which we ſhould condemn in others, muſt be avoided by a pure conſcience.

## PART IV.

## *Of SATISFACTION.*

### CHAP. I.

#### *What ſatisfaction is.*

SAtisfaction, the third part of penance, conſiſts in doing or ſuffering ſomething to repair in ſome manner the offence or injury which is done to God by ſin.

I ſay to repair in ſome manner, becauſe the great reparation for ſin was performed by the Son of God, who by his precious blood and death has ſuperabundantly repaired the injury which ſin did to God, and merited a general pardon of all the puniſhments that divine juſtice could require.

This reparation has opened and facilitated a way to a reconciliation with God after ſin. For as much as the merits of our Savi-

our being applied to us, (as they are by the ſacraments of baptiſm and penance) reſtore us again to the grace of God, which we had loſt, and make us receive the remiſſion of the eternal puniſhment due to our ſins. All this is through the merits of *Jeſus Chriſt*, and by virtue of the ſatisfaction which he has given to God the Father for the ſame ſins. A ſatisfaction, without which we ſhould always have remained uncapable of ſatisfying God, and by conſequence of ever returning again into his grace and favour.

But as it is in his power, who receives another again into his favour, by whom he has been offended, to admit him on ſuch conditions as he ſhall think fit; and either to remit him all the puniſhment, or to oblige him to undergo only part of it; it has pleaſed the divine wiſdom, in reſpect of us, to make uſe of both the one and the other of theſe two ways of reconciliation, though more ordinarily of the ſecond.

*Temporal puniſhment remitted in baptiſm, not in penance.*

For in baptiſm he receives us into his grace, and remits us all the puniſhment due to our ſins. In penance he remits us indeed the eternal puniſhment, but ſtill reſerves ſome temporal chaſtiſement to be ſuffered by the penitent, to the end that he may ſatisfy on his part according to his power, and for other reaſons which we ſhall ſpeak of hereafter.

In the undergoing of this temporal chaſtiſement, conſiſts the ſatisfaction whereof we ſpeak in this place, which is the third part of penance.

## CHAP. II.

*God pardoning ſin, yet inflicts a temporal puniſhment.*

WHEN God pardoned the firſt man his ſin, it was upon condition that he ſhould do penance for the ſame by labour, to which God condemned him; and indeed it was a very ſevere penance, as it was not to end but with life.

When God pardoned *David*, his ſins of adultery and murder, he told him by his prophet *Nathan*, that he ſhould be chaſtiſed by the death of his child. God remitted him none of the many afflictions with which he threatened him by the ſame prophet; theſe were that the ſword ſhould never depart from his houſe:

that

that he himself should be eye witness to the dishonour of his family and dissension among his children, besides other misfortunes.

For this reason the penitents of the Old Testament, when they begged of God pardon of their sins, never asked to be exempt from all punishment, but only not to be chastised according to the rigour of divine justice. They desired to avoid his fury, and the more signal effects of his wrath, yet they submitted themselves to the fatherly correction he should be pleased to impose upon them. *Rebuke me not, O Lord,* said *David, in thy indignation; nor chastise me in thy wrath**. A little after he declares, that he is ready to do penance, and to suffer for his sins: *I am ready,* says he, *for scourges*†. The Prophet *Jeremias* begs of God that he will *correct* him, *but not in his fury*‡.

These and many like examples shew evidently that God does not pardon sins, but upon condition of doing penance; and that the penitents of that time never pretended, nor required to be exempt from suffering for their sins.

Yea, even some of the most enlightened among them having sounded into the depth of the punishment which God has reserved to himself in the other life, discovered that God punished after death even the sins of the just, which had not been sufficiently expiated during life. *Judas Machabeus,* not only a great captain, but also high priest of the law, after a signal victory, sent orders to *Jerusalem* to offer sacrifice for the sins of the faithful, who had been slain in battle. The scripture approves that action, as *an holy and wholsome thought*§; assuring us, that by prayers and sacrifices the dead are loosed from their sins. But this cannot be understood of sin, as to the fault, or the eternal punishment, which cannot be remitted after death, no more than the fault from whence it springs. It must then be understood of the temporal punishment which the dead ought to satisfy for in the other life, and from which they may be released by the prayers and sacrifices of the living.

In the new law God has still holden the same conduct with regard to receiving Christians into his favour, by obliging them to some temporal punishment, and that with so much the more reason, as the law they profess being more holy and more perfect, ought to punish more rigorously the sins committed against it.



* Psalm cxxxvii. 1. † Psalm cxxxvii. 18. ‡ Jerem. x. 24. § 2 Mach. xii. 46.

For this reaſon our Saviour ſays, that *in the day of judgment* we muſt *render an account for every idle word* *. This ſentence ſhall be paſſed after death, when we ſhall give an account of our ſins, to receive the puniſhment thereof. This ſhall not be an eternal puniſhment, for they will not deſerve it; it muſt then be a temporal puniſhment, which muſt be undergone, and by which we muſt ſatisfy in the other life, if we have not ſatisfied during this.

Hence the ſame Son of God, by giving to his Apoſtles power to remit and forgive ſins, has alſo given that of binding ſinners. This power of binding reaches to many things; but among others it contains the power of obliging penitents to make ſatisfaction for their ſins; and in releaſing them from the bonds of the guilt and eternal puniſhment, it impoſes upon them a temporal puniſhment for the ſatisfaction of divine juſtice. Thus the church has always underſtood that power of binding, as the council of *Trent* has declared †. Pronouncing thoſe accurſed that hold the contrary ‡.

Hence the ſame church, which is infallible in the interpretation of the ſentiments of her ſpouſe, has always made uſe of this power from the Apoſtles down to this preſent time; having always received ſinners unto the ſacrament of penance, not till after impoſing upon them wholſome penances for their ſins. Accordingly ſhe has made rules and canons, preſcribing different penances for different kinds of ſins.

## CHAP. III.

*Excellent reaſons out of the council of* Trent, *to ſhew why God, remitting the ſin by penance, obliges the penitent ſinner to a temporal puniſhment.*

*1ſt reaſon.* THE holy council of *Trent* draws the firſt reaſon from the ſtrict equity of divine juſtice, which treats thoſe in a different manner who are not guilty alike, for example, thoſe who have ſinned before baptiſm, and thoſe who have offended after they have received it. As the former, they have ſinned with more ignorance, and without having received ſo many graces as Chriſtians have, God forgives by baptiſm not only all their ſins, but alſo all the puniſhment which he might juſtly exact in ſatisfaction for them; granting them an entire pardon of all that is paſſed, in favour of their

* Mat. xii. 36. † Seſſ. 14. c. 8. ‡ Can. 15.

their firſt admiſſion to the Chriſtian religion: But he treats otherwiſe thoſe who relapſe into ſin after baptiſm, whoſe faults are infinitely greater; becauſe they then have a clearer knowledge of ſin, and offend after they have been delivered from the ſlavery of ſin and the Devil; after they have received the grace of the Holy Ghoſt, by which their ſoul became the dwelling-place of God; ſo that by ſinning they violate the temple of God, and contriſtate the Holy Ghoſt, whom they baniſh from their ſoul. Theſe reaſons, which ſo much aggravate the ſins of Chriſtians, are alſo the cauſe why God does not pardon them with ſo much indulgence, but obliges the penitent to make ſome ſatisfaction.

" Certainly, (ſays the council*) the equity of divine juſtice re-
" quires that he ſhould deal otherwiſe with them, who before bap-
" tiſm have ſinned through ignorance, than with them who by holy
" baptiſm have been delivered from the ſervitude of ſin and the
" Devil, and after having received the gift of the Holy Ghoſt
" have not been afraid to violate the temple of God, and con-
" triſtate his holy Spirit."

From thence the council deſcends to the *2d reaſon.*
ſecond reaſon, drawn from the goodneſs of God, which impoſes theſe puniſhments for our advantage. " It is
" very agreeable to the divine bounty not to remit our ſins with-
" out obliging us to ſome ſatisfaction, leſt by occaſion of too much
" mildneſs we ſhould think our ſins leſs than they are; and from
" thence take occaſion to fall into greater, and to become in-
" jurious and contumelious to the Holy Ghoſt, and draw upon
" ourſelves the divine wrath in the day of wrath. For without
" doubt theſe ſatisfactory puniſhments have a wonderful virtue to
" divert penitents from ſin, and ſerve as a bridle to reſtrain them
" and teach them to keep a ſtricter watch over themſelves for the
" future. Beſides, they cure thoſe remains and diſorders which
" ſin had left in the ſoul, and root out the vitious habits con-
" tracted by a diſorderly way of living."

In theſe laſt words the council comprehends *3d reaſon.*
a third reaſon, drawn from the wholſome effects which follow from ſatisfaction, which are the correction of paſt faults, and amendment of penitents for the future.

It adds two more reaſons, *viz.* that the works of penance duly performed are a power- *4th & 5th reaſon.*
ful means to avert the puniſhment which



* Seſſ. 14. c. 8.

divine juſtice is ready to inflict upon us: and that by undergoing ſome temporal puniſhment for our ſins, we reſemble our Saviour *Jeſus Chriſt*, who has ſuffered for our ſins, and from whoſe merit our ſatisfactions derive all their force or efficacy, being aſſured that *if we ſuffer with him*, we ſhall *be alſo glorified with him* *.

## CHAP. IV.

*Wherein ſatisfaction conſiſts, and whether it be eſſential to the ſacrament of penance.*

WE have already ſaid that it conſiſts in doing or ſuffering ſome painful thing, inſtead of the temporal puniſhment which God reſerves to himſelf after the remiſſion of ſin.

This ſatisfaction may be performed two ſeveral ways, either in virtue of the ſacrament by the impoſition of the prieſt, or out of the ſacrament by the devotion of the penitent.

That only which is impoſed by the prieſt is ſacramental, and makes a part of the ſacrament of penance.

That which the penitent performs of his own accord, is an effect of the virtue of penance with which his heart is filled. Although this does not make a part of the ſacrament, it is nevertheleſs very profitable and wholſome, yea often very neceſſary to ſupply the defects of the penance impoſed by confeſſors, which generally falls very ſhort of the puniſhment which their ſins deſerve in the ſight of God.

It may be aſked, whether ſacramental ſatisfaction be eſſential to the ſacrament of penance: that is to ſay, whether it be ſo neceſſary, that without it the ſacrament would be invalid as to the remiſſion of ſins.

To this we muſt anſwer by diſtinguiſhing between actual ſatisfaction, and a ſincere will to ſatisfy: the firſt is not ſo eſſential to the ſacrament, that without it the abſolution would be null: it being certain, that abſolution may be given to a penitent before he has actually made any ſatisfaction impoſed by the prieſt, as it is evident from the practice of the church.

*Without the will of ſatisfying God, abſolution is null.*

But as to the will of ſatisfying God, it is ſo neceſſary, that without it the abſolution would be of no effect; becauſe that will is inſeparable from true contrition, and he who has it not, cannot have the neceſſary ſorrow for his ſins, nor

* Rom. viii. 17.

nor be truly penitent; "Since it is the proper effect of penance "to endeavour to deſtroy ſin, and repair the injury it does to "Almighty God*."

Beſides, as it is not the intention of God to forgive ſin, but by obliging the ſinner to a temporal puniſhment; ſo neither can it be, that he who does not deſign to undergo that pain can receive the remiſſion of his ſins, which is not given him but upon that condition. Moreover, by that reſiſtance to the divine will, he commits a ſin in his very confeſſion, and by conſequence renders himſelf incapable of abſolution. This truth we ſhall ſee more clearly hereafter in Chap. VI.

## CHAP. V.

*Of the conditions ſatisfaction ought to have in regard of the confeſſor.*

PENANCE depends upon two perſons, the prieſt that impoſes it, and the penitent who accepts and performs it. There are certain conditions which it ought to have on both ſides. I ſhall ſpeak briefly of the one and the other, that not only the penitent may know how he ought to perform it in order to reap advantage therefrom, but alſo what the confeſſor on his ſide is obliged to do, that the penitent may receive with greater ſubmiſſion the penance which ſhall be enjoined him.

*The penance enjoined muſt be juſt, charitable and prudent.*

The penance then, which is enjoined by the confeſſor, muſt have three conditions: it muſt be juſt, charitable, and prudent; that is, impoſed with juſtice, with charity, and with prudence. With juſtice, in regard to the honour and intereſt of God; with charity, in reſpect of the ſalvation of the penitent; with prudence, in order to the forming of a right judgment of the quality of the penance, and foreſeeing the effects which may follow.

Theſe three conditions correſpond to the three characters of a confeſſor in this ſacrament, of a judge, of a father, of a phyſician: he ought there to behave himſelf as a juſt judge, as a charitable father, and as a wiſe phyſician.

Firſt, it muſt be juſt, that is, proportioned to the ſins, as well in reſpect of the enormity, as the number; for if the penance be too rigorous, it is an injuſtice to the penitent; if it be too light or eaſy,

* S. Thomas 3. p. q. 85. a. 2.

eaſy, it is an injuſtice done to God. The firſt happens very ſeldom, but the ſecond frequently, and renders directors extremely culpable in the ſight of God, " by occaſioning penitents " not to make the ſatisfaction which is due to him*."

This proportion of the penance with the ſin, is not to be underſtood of an exact and rigorous proportion; for that cannot poſſibly be obſerved by man, none but God knowing the puniſhment which each ſin deſerves. But it is to be underſtood of a moral and prudent proportion; ſo that a greater penance muſt be aſſigned to greater or more numerous ſins; and a leſs, for leſs heinous and fewer ſins: all this muſt be enjoined according to the ability of the penitent, which depends upon the ſtrength of their bodies, the diſpoſition of their minds, their age, their ſex, their ſtate, and the like.

In this the confeſſors ought to proceed with much circumſpection, remembering that they are not abſolute maſters in the impoſing of penances as they pleaſe, but that they act as miniſters of *Jeſus Chriſt:* and that it does not appertain to the ſervant to diſpoſe at his pleaſure of what belongs to his maſter.

For this reaſon the council of *Trent* ſpeaking of ſatisfaction, gives this inſtruction to confeſſors, worthy to be obſerved, and which they ought always to have before their eyes. I ſhall cite it in this place, not only for the confeſſors, but alſo for the penitents ſake, that they may know in this point the obligations their confeſſors are under, and may underſtand that they are not abſolute maſters of the penances they enjoin.

" The prieſts of our Lord ought, as far as the Holy Ghoſt and " prudence ſhall ſuggeſt unto them, to enjoin convenient and " wholſome penances, having regard to the quality of the ſins, " and the ability of the penitents; for fear leſt if they ſhould " connive at their ſins, and uſe them too indulgently, enjoining " ſome light works for moſt heinous crimes, they may become " partakers of others ſins. They muſt have a particular care that the " penances they impoſe be not only a means to preſerve the peni- " tents in grace, and cure their infirmities, but alſo ſerve to pu- " niſh their paſt offences †."

If penitents would but conſider well this admonition, and the obligation their confeſſors are under of weighing well the penances they enjoin, they would not complain, as frequently they do,

* St. Cyprian, lib. 1. ep. 3. † Conc. Trid. Seſſ. 14. c. 8.

do, that their penances are too ſevere; whereas they are far inferior to what they deſerve.

Next to juſtice, charity is neceſſary in enjoining a penance; where the prieſt ought to be mindful that he is the ſpiritual father of his penitent, to reſtore him to the life of grace. Now this is to be underſtood of a true and real charity according to God, which ought to make him ſolicitous for the ſalvation of the penitent, uſing to that end mild or ſevere remedies, as he ſhall judge moſt proper and moſt convenient.

Thus charity avoids two extremes, the one of two ſevere confeſſors, who behave themſelves in regard of their penitents, as ſome fathers do towards their children, whom they treat always with ſo much rigour, that they rather diſhearten than amend them: the other is, of too eaſy and indulgent directors who either following their own complying nature, or negligently fulfilling that important charge, treat all their penitents with an equal, but indiſcreet ſweetneſs, enjoining but ſlight penances for mortal ſins, how great or how numerous ſoever they be.

Theſe two extremes are wrong, and have frequently very ill conſequences. The former renders confeſſion troubleſome and tedious, and diſcourages penitents. The latter makes it unprofitable, or of little or no effect towards their amendment. This indiſcreet mildneſs flatters them in their vices, without putting them to the trouble of correcting them, as we ſee by too frequent experience, and by the acknowledgment of penitents themſelves, who frequently own that this exceſſive mildneſs has been very prejudicial to them by continuing them in their ſins.

Thoſe ſpiritual guides ought firſt to remember, that by this their mildneſs they become guilty of others ſins. Secondly, "they prejudice their penitents in an high degree whilſt they think to favour "them. They hinder them from doing penance, and from ſatisfying "God by their good works, and are the cauſes of their frequent "relapſes into ſin *." Moreover, they ought to conſider that they do no leſs prejudice to the ſacrament of penance, which through their indulgence is deprived of one of its chief effects, the amendment of ſinners. Beſides, their behaviour is highly prejudicial to other confeſſors, who adminiſter that ſacrament with greater fidelity. Penitents accuſtomed to this great indulgence cannot ſubmit to confeſſors who are more exact in their duty, although theſe treat them with great prudence and much charity. Penitents complain

* S. Cyprian, Epiſt. ix.

complain of them, fly from them, and seek out the most indulgent, and oftentimes the most negligent in the discharge of their duty.

There is a mean to be observed betwixt severity and mildness; they must temper the one with the other, as well in their admonitions as in the penances which they enjoin, according to the respective dispositions of the penitent. They must treat with more mildness one who is sincerely contrite, and with more rigour another who is void of this necessary disposition. They must encourage the timid, and soften the obstinate. Prudence is also necessary to enjoin a salutary penance. This governs and directs the two preceding conditions, justice and charity, and applies them in their proper place, and as they ought to be. Now this is not meer human prudence only, but a prudence inspired by God, and which we ought to beg of him. Wherefore the council of *Trent* said above: "As much as the holy spirit and prudence shall suggest to him." This prudence in the enjoining of penance consists in the observance of many things, but particularly three, that the penitent be able to comply with the penance, that it be advantageous to him, and that it be secret for secret sins.

*Three conditions of a penance enjoined.*

The confessor must foresee whether or not the penitent be able to perform the penance enjoined; he must enquire whether he can comply with it, and hear the reasons he may alledge. He must either shew him the means how to perform it, or give him another penance.

He must, as much as possible, enjoin such a penance as may be for the salvation and amendment of the penitent, so that, making satisfaction to divine justice, he may be confirmed in grace, and in the way of virtue. This is done by the imposition of such a satisfactory punishment, as also serves for a remedy against the spiritual distempers of the penitent: For example, of fasting against intemperance and luxury; of alms-deeds against covetousness and prodigality, and so of the rest.

In short, the penance must be secret, that is, such as may be performed in private, without being taken notice of by others; so that there be no rational fear, that by the penance the penitent may be judged to have committed some notorious sin, from whence scandal may arise to others, and infamy to the penitent.

This is to be understood, when the sin is secret, and the penitent is in good repute among those with whom he lives; for if his

his ſins are public, or known to others, or if he be not accounted a very good and virtuous man, it is not only no harm, that the penance be known to others; but it is often very proper, and ſometimes neceſſary, that he may edify thoſe by his penance and converſion, whom he had ſcandalized by his wicked way of living.

## CHAP. VI.

*Of the conditions of ſatisfaction in reſpect of the penitent.*

THE penitent contributes two things to ſacramental ſatisfaction, the acceptance and the putting of it in execution; which is the reaſon why the conditions it requires of him are, that it be ſincerely accepted, and duly performed.

Firſt, the penance muſt be accepted, and before the acceptance it is no part of the ſacrament; becauſe, the ſacrament is compoſed of three actions with regard to the penitent, contrition, confeſſion, and ſatisfaction: Now ſatisfaction begins to be an action of the penitent by acceptance.

Secondly, it is not only neceſſary that the penance be accepted, that ſo it may be a part of the ſacrament; but the penitent alſo is obliged to accept it, if he intend to receive the ſacrament, for the non-acceptance of the penance would render the ſacrament defective at leaſt in the integrity of its parts; nay more, it would ſignify that he has no mind to ſatisfy divine juſtice; yet this mind or will is eſſential to the ſacrament, and neceſſarily included in contrition, as is above declared.

Thirdly, the penitent is not only obliged to receive ſuch a ſatisfaction as himſelf thinks fit, but ſuch an one as the prieſt ſhall judge reaſonable; becauſe the prieſt is his judge, having power to oblige him to the puniſhment at the ſame time he remits his ſins; and conſequently the penitent ought to follow, and ſubmit himſelf to the judgment of the prieſt, and, if he refuſe, the prieſt may deny him abſolution.

The catechiſm of the council of *Trent* declares this truth in terms very proper to be cited in this place, to convince penitents of this their obligation.

"Penance is a certain compenſation or recompence for ſins, "(that is, a virtue or action, by which one gives to God in ſome "ſort the honour which he had taken from him) proceeding from "the will of him who has offended, and appointed by the will of "God

" God againſt whom the ſin was committed. Wherefore the will " of making reparation is alſo required in penance, as being the " chief part of contrition; and it is a neceſſity incumbent on the " penitent, to ſubmit himſelf to the judgment of the prieſt, who " repreſents in that place the perſon of God, that he may enjoin a " puniſhment according to the greatneſs of the ſin*."

By this authority penitents may ſee the obligation they have of ſubmitting themſelves to their confeſſors, and accepting of the penance they enjoin, in which alſo confeſſors ought to proceed with much diſcretion, regarding always what is moſt expedient for the ſalvation of the penitent.

*Acceptance of penance muſt be humble, voluntary, and ſincere.*

That this acceptance of the penance may be well performed, it muſt be done with theſe three conditions, humbly, willingly, and ſincerely.

Accept it then humbly, *Theotime*, that is, with reſpect, ſubmitting yourſelf to the judgment of your confeſſor, as your judge, your father, and your phyſician, and of him that holds the place of God. If you find any difficulty in what he ſhall ordain, declare it modeſtly, and follow his directions.

Accept it willingly, acknowledging that you deſerve a greater puniſhment, and that this chaſtiſement is far leſs than what you owe to divine juſtice.

Accept it ſincerely, that is, with a good and ſteady reſolution, fully to perform all he ſhall command you.

As to the performance of the penance, it ought to be exact, and faithfully complied with. There is an obligation to diſcharge one's ſelf of this duty, 1. Becauſe it is a part, and belongs to the perfection of the ſacrament; 2. Becauſe it is enjoined by an authority which has power to oblige, ſince God has declared that to be bound in heaven which the prieſt binds upon earth; 3. Becauſe it is in virtue of that acceptance one receives abſolution.

There is then an obligation of complying with that penance which one has accepted; and he who on ſet purpoſe, or by wilful negligence fails to perform it, commits a ſin: and this more or leſs grievous, according as the omiſſion is more or leſs conſiderable. If it be but a ſlight omiſſion, it is but a venial ſin; but if it be a conſiderable omiſſion, as of the whole penance, or the greateſt part of it, it may be a mortal ſin: at leaſt it would be

* De Sac. Pen. n. 29.

be ſuch, if the penance was enjoined in ſatisfaction for a mortal ſin.

Perform then faithfully your penance, in obedience to God in the perſon of your confeſſor, and in compliance with your promiſe to the end that you may render the ſacrament entire.

But remember to perform it willingly, devoutly, and ſecretly.

*Method of performing the penance enjoined.*

Willingly, to avoid the fault of thoſe who never perform it but with regret and trouble, whereby they loſe the greateſt part of the merit they might otherwiſe obtain. It is ſtrange, that men ſhould run into ſin with ſo much earneſtneſs and pleaſure, yet ſhould have ſuch an averſion and horror againſt penance, which is a remedy againſt it. This is a complaint *Tertullian* makes of his time. "We nauſeate the remedy, though we longed for the poiſon."

Perform it alſo devoutly, but eſpecially with the ſpirit of repentance, and an acknowledgment that it is an atonement you are making to God for the injury you have done him by your ſins. Place them always before your eyes, deplore them as *David* did. *I know my iniquity, and my ſin is always before me* *.

Laſtly, perform your penance ſecretly, if it be great, and if it be given you for great ſins, but which are altogether unknown to thoſe with whom you live, that you may neither ſcandalize any one, nor defame yourſelf. This is a thing wherein penitents, and particularly young people are frequently faulty, declaring indiſcreetly their penances to others, which cannot but be of very ill conſequence, when their penances are long and conſiderable.

If the penance be enjoined you for ſins that are known to others; as you ought not to affect to publiſh it, ſo neither ought you to avoid the making of it known, provided it contribute to the edification of others, and ſatisfy for the ſcandal which your ſins have occaſioned.

CHAP.

* Pſalm l. 4.

## CHAP. VII.

*Of the works which may be enjoined for penance.*

*Prayer, fasting, and alms enjoined for penance.*

THE most ordinary works of penance are prayer, fasting, alms-deeds, and whatsoever may have a relation to any of these three; such as in respect of prayer, are reading pious books, meditation, confession, hearing mass.

In respect of fasting, all the mortifications of the body, labour, retrenching lawful pleasures, and abstinence from things either hurtful or dangerous.

In regard of alms, all the assistance one can give to his neighbour.

These three sorts of works are very proper for penance. For first, by these three works we submit to God all the goods which we possess, whether of the mind, of the body, or of our fortune. The goods of the mind by prayer, which subjects the spirit to God; those of the body by fasting and other mortifications; and those of our fortune by alms-deeds.

Secondly, because almost all our sins consist in the abuse of some of these three things. Pride proceeds from the abuse of the goods or advantages of the mind; luxury from those of the body; and from the abuse of our riches proceeds covetousness: we repair that abuse by the three above-mentioned works. Prayer humbles the mind; fasting reclaims the body; and alms apply riches to a proper use.

These three works are highly commended in the scripture, as having a wonderful force to appease God's anger after sin, and to obtain of him all favours.

"It is said of prayer, that *the prayer of the humble and the meek hath always pleased God* *. That *the prayer of him that humbleth himself, shall pierce the clouds* †. Piercing, as I may say, the heavens to mount to the divine throne, and make itself heard, and obtain what it desires. "Prayer ascends unto heaven, and mercy descends "from thence upon man. To make prayer mount more easily up "to heaven, it is good to give it two wings, *viz.* fasting and "alms ‡."

As for fasting, it is said, that *prayer is good with fasting* §. That the fasting and penance of the *Ninevites* appeased God's wrath against

* Judith ix. 16. † Eccli. xxxv. 21. ‡ St. Augustine. § Tob. xii. 8.

againſt them. When God exhorts his people to penance, he aſſigns faſting as one of the moſt efficacious means. *Be converted to me, in faſting, and in weeping, and in mourning* *.

And as for alms, it is ſaid, *Alms deliver from all ſin, and from death, and will not ſuffer the ſoul to go into darkneſs* †. That *with alms* we muſt *redeem* our *ſins* ‡. That we muſt *ſhut up alms in the heart of the poor, and it ſhall obtain help* for us *againſt all evil* §.

There is a great number of other paſſages in the holy ſcripture which ſhew how powerful theſe three works are to obtain the mercy of God, and remiſſion of ſins.

Theſe three works have each of them three ſingular qualities, which render them more amiable, and commend them to our more frequent practice. For they are ſatisfactory, meritorious, and impetratory.

They are ſatisfactory in reſpect of the temporal puniſhment of paſt ſins, by reaſon of the uneaſineſs they cauſe either in the body or mind. By this uneaſineſs willingly undergone, we ſatisfy for the puniſhments which are due to the ſins for which we have not hitherto done ſufficient penance.

They are meritorious in reſpect of grace and glory; which is common to all good works performed in the ſtate of ſanctifying grace.

They are impetratory, that is, they have a particular virtue to obtain of God the favours which we crave in doing them; and with how much the more humble and contrite ſpirit they are performed, by ſo much more eaſily they obtain what they aſk.

With all theſe excellent qualities, they have yet another no leſs deſirable: it is this, they are ſovereign antidotes againſt the diſtempers of the ſoul, and ſerve not only as a remedy to cure paſt ſins, but alſo as a preſervative againſt them for the future.

## CHAP. VIII.

*That the penitent who truly deſires to ſecure his ſalvation, ought not to ſatisfy himſelf with the penance enjoined him in the ſacrament, but he ought to perform others.*

*Voluntary penances neceſſary.*

IT is a great and very common miſtake among penitents to content themſelves with only performing the penance enjoined them,



* Joel. ii. 22. † Tob. iv. 11. ‡ Dan. iv. 24. § Eccli. xxix. 15.

and to believe that they have done enough, when they have performed the penance such as it was, though frequently far less than what it ought to be. It is the cause of many evils, and particularly of the small progress made in virtue, of loose living, and relapses into sin; it being certain, that if we did penance as we ought, for our past offences, we should not so easily fall into other sins. Be persuaded then that you ought to do other penances besides those that are enjoined you in confession, and this for several reasons.

First, the better to satisfy divine justice for your past sins, on account of which much more must be suffered, which will be greatly diminished by such voluntary penances. Secondly, to make you more grateful and acceptable in the sight of God, and to merit at his hands those graces, which by your former crimes you had justly lost. Thirdly, to restrain you from offending God, and relapsing into those sins for which you now see yourself obliged to suffer. Fourthly, to cure the vitious and wicked inclinations of your soul, by exercising the acts of contrary virtues, in those voluntary sufferings.

The council of *Trent* says*, "That the life of a Christian "ought to be a perpetual penance; and that the just ought to work "out their salvation with fear and trembling, by labour, by watch-"ings, alms-deeds, prayers, fastings, and by chastity." These maxims are drawn from the doctrine of *Jesus Christ* and his Apostles; so that there is not the least ground for doubting the truth thereof.

Wherefore, dear *Theotime*, I exhort you to reflect seriously upon this truth, and convince yourself, that it is necessary for you to do penance in whatever state you are, if you intend to live like a Christian. It is a great error to believe that penance belongs only to religious, it is the duty of all Christians, and of all those that hope to save their souls. But you will ask me how is this to be done? Behold the means, far easier than they are imagined to be.

Penance consists in two things, in a detestation of sin, and in suffering in order to satisfy for the injury it has done to God. One of these is in the heart, the other in action; comply with them both, and you will perform a very profitable penance.

First, preserve always in your heart a true regret for having offended God. And in order to it, accustom yourself daily to renew it,

* Sess. 6, c. 13.

it, and excite acts of sorrow in your morning and night prayers, by begging pardon of God for your sins, and detesting them from the bottom of your heart, purposing to do penance for them.

Secondly, suffer for your sins: 1. By imposing upon yourself some penitential work to perform every day: sometimes a recital of some prayers, at other times a distribution of alms; sometimes abstinence, or a retrenchment of some lawful pleasures, as divertisements, or the like. But all this must be done upon the motive of making satisfaction for injuries done to God, which is the spirit of penance. 2. Accepting willingly, and with the same spirit of penance and satisfaction, all the pains and evils which daily befal you, as the inconveniences of life, the disorders of body, the troubles of mind, disgusts, loss of goods, poverty, distress, afflictions either public or private; and generally all the evils which occur, and with which this life so much abounds. Join to these general evils those that are peculiar to your state, and bear them with the same penitential disposition.

All these afflictions and troubles may help us to do penance, and satisfy for our sins, upon condition we suffer them with patience (as the council of *Trent* has declared*) and with sorrow for our offences. Whereas, on the contrary, when we undergo them without patience, and without offering them up to God for the remission of our sins, our sufferings are not only not mitigated, but also rendered unprofitable, without affording either any benefit for the future, or any comfort for the present. This ought to be well observed.

## CHAP. IX.

*Of sacramental absolution. What it is; wherein it consists, and what are its effects.*

ALTHOUGH absolution be a part of the priests office, yet it is very fit the penitent should be instructed in it, that he may receive it with respect and suitable dispositions.

First, he must know, that, as in every sacrament there are two parts, whereof one is called the matter, the other the form; so absolution is the form of the sacrament of penance, without which the sacrament is invalid.



* Sess. 14. c. 8. & 9.

This abſolution is a juridical ſentence pronounced by the prieſt upon the penitent, by which, after he has taken cognizance of the ſins which the penitent has confeſſed, and of his good diſpoſition to receive the remiſſion of them; and after he has enjoined him a proper penance, he remits his ſins on the behalf of God, and by the authority which God has given him.

*The words of abſolution.*

It conſiſts but in theſe few words, which are eſſential to it, *I abſolve thee from thy ſins*; all the others which the prieſt ſays before and after them are prayers which the holy church has inſtituted to implore the grace and mercy of God upon the penitent, and which may be omitted in caſe of neceſſity.

The effects of abſolution are to remit ſin, as far as concerns the fault or offence againſt God, and the eternal puniſhment, to blot out the ſtains which ſin had cauſed in the ſoul, to recover the favour and friendſhip of God by means of ſanctifying grace which it beſtows upon the penitent, and to revive in him all preceding merits which were loſt by ſin.

It produces all theſe effects the moment it is pronounced. In that happy moment, the ſoul is tranſlated from the ſtate of ſin to that of grace, and from the ſlavery of the Devil to the felicity of the children of God.

O bleſſed moment! *Theotime*, O happy change! If we knew how to conceive it aright, how ſhould we bleſs God, *who* hath *given ſuch power to men**! What high eſteem ſhould we have of this divine ſacrament, which works ſuch wonderful effects in us, and reinſtates us in the way of ſalvation which we had forſaken through ſin!

But as theſe admirable effects are produced only in ſuch as are worthily prepared, it is neceſſary to treat of the diſpoſitions, without which we cannot obtain the great and ineſtimable benefit of the remiſſion of ſin, but with them we are ſure of receiving it.

## CHAP. X.

*Of the diſpoſitions requiſite for receiving abſolution, and the caſes in which it ought to be refuſed or deferred.*

THERE is the greater neceſſity for your being well inſtructed concerning theſe diſpoſitions, dear *Theotime*, becauſe they are unknown to the greateſt part of Chriſtians, who think that nothing

* Matt. ix. 8.

nothing more is required than a ſuccinct confeſſion of their ſins. They imagine, that having acknowledged their guilt, abſolution is to follow of courſe, and that their confeſſor is to give it without reſtriction, after having aſſigned ſome light penance.

This error ariſes from their want of due inſtruction concerning the nature of this ſacrament, which being inſtituted for man's reconcilement to God whom he has offended, not only requires that the ſinner confeſs his crimes, but that he manifeſt a hearty regret and ſincere reſolution never more to offend him, into whoſe favour he ſeeks to return. Now the confeſſor, by whoſe miniſtry this reconciliation is made, muſt be ſatisfied that the penitent, who confeſſes his ſins, be truly penitent for having offended God, and firmly reſolved to fall no more into diſgrace by a repetition of his ſins.

This knowledge of the penitent's contrition, is an indiſpenſable duty incumbent on the confeſſor, becauſe contrition being an eſſential part of the ſacrament, and without which ſin can never be forgiven, it follows, that the confeſſor is under an obligation of knowing, as far as moral certainty in ſuch a caſe can go, whether the penitent be grieved from his heart; to the attaining of this knowledge he ought to apply himſelf with the greateſt care and exactneſs. Otherwiſe, beſides being wanting in a principal point of his duty, he expoſes himſelf to the evident danger of abſolving an unworthy penitent, and committing a ſacrilege inſtead of conferring a ſacrament; to ſay nothing of leaving his penitent in a falſe ſecurity of being abſolved from his ſins, when he is very far from it: and even under a greater guilt than before, having aſked and received abſolution, without being duly diſpoſed by a ſincere regret for having offended God, and a ſerious reſolution of amendment for the future.

*The penitent's good diſpoſitions muſt be known to the confeſſor.*

He muſt then know and judge whether the penitent be ſufficiently diſpoſed to receive abſolution. And ſince theſe diſpoſitions conſiſt of two things, in a ſincere confeſſion and in a true contrition for his ſins, he muſt judge of them both, and if he knows any deficiency in either of them, or juſtly doubts, he ought to refuſe abſolution, or defer it till another time.

Firſt, as to confeſſion, he muſt judge whether it be entire and true, and made with requiſite preparation. If he perceive that the penitent has not examined his conſcience, he muſt oblige him to

take more time to call to mind his ſins. If he judge that he does not declare all his ſins, from a deſign of concealing any one, he ought diſcreetly to diſmiſs him, provided he has good grounds for forming that judgment: for example, if he ſee that the penitent accuſes himſelf with much difficulty and with that ſhame, that prevents his declaring all his ſins: or if he know by ſome other way, that he has committed ſome ſin, whereof he does not accuſe himſelf, provided that he know it not by another's confeſſion, which is a knowledge whereof he can make no uſe in regard of this ſecond penitent; if therefore no other reaſon appear, he ought to give him abſolution.

As to contrition, the confeſſor ought to underſtand whether the penitent have that which is ſufficient; and if he judge that he has not, he cannot abſolve him.

This judgment may be made two ways; with certainty, or with a doubt only, but that well grounded. In the firſt caſe he ought to deny abſolution, or at leaſt defer it, till the penitent be better diſpoſed: in the ſecond, he ought to defer it in proportion to the doubt. The confeſſor judges with certainty, that contrition is wanting in theſe three following caſes.

Firſt, when the penitent gives not the leaſt exterior ſign of it, but is deaf and inſenſible to all that the confeſſor tells him. In this caſe, ſays the catechiſm of the council of *Trent*, the confeſſor ſeeing that the penitent is not at all moved with compunction for his ſins, muſt mildly diſmiſs him.

Secondly, when either the penitent does not ſeriouſly promiſe amendment, or when he does promiſe, but will not perform what is neceſſary to effect it, as avoiding the immediate occaſions of ſin, ſuch as wicked company, bad books, games that cauſe him to ſwear, &c.

Thirdly, when he will not fulfil that to which he is obliged, as to reſtore ill-gotten goods, forgive his enemies, and be reconciled to them.

In theſe three caſes the confeſſor ought to deny abſolution, becauſe the penitent is not in a ſtate fit to receive it, as ſtill retaining an affection to mortal ſin, which is incompatible with ſanctifying grace.

He muſt alſo deny it, when the penitent is guilty of any ſin, reſerved to a ſuperior; becauſe in this caſe he has not power to abſolve him.

There

There are other cases where he cannot so certainly judge of the want of true contrition, but where however he may reasonably doubt of it. And this frequently is the cause of much trouble to the confessor, who considers on the one side that he is obliged in conscience to deny absolution to him that is unworthy of it; and on the other side finds himself pressed by the penitent to give it, who judges always in his own favour, and believes himself better disposed than in reality he is.

This difficulty and doubt happen on several occasions, which it would be difficult and too long to point out here in particular. The most general one is, when the penitent after his confession relapses frequently into his mortal sins, as it happens to such as confess seldom, but more especially to those who have contracted any vitious habit, into which they frequently fall back without any amendment after confession. For although every time they confess, they testify a sorrowful sense for their sins, and promise to amend; yet, having already failed so often, we may reasonably doubt, whether this last resolution of amendment be real and sincere or not. But as this point is exceedingly difficult, we shall set apart the following chapter, for instructing the penitents in what manner confessors are to behave on such occasions, where their salvation is so highly concerned.

## CHAP. XI.

*In what manner a confessor ought to behave in regard to penitents in habitual sin.*

THIS question chiefly regards habitual sins that are mortal: for as venial sin does not destroy sanctifying grace, and may be remitted independently of the sacrament, it is not requisite to lay down any rules on that subject.

A habit of sin may be contracted in any kind of vice, but is most commonly found in sins of swearing, blasphemy, impurity, drunkenness, slander, and the like. The question is, how a confessor must behave in regard of a penitent, subject to frequent relapses into the same mortal sins, without any amendment after repeated confessions.

*Important enquiry: how the habitual sinner is to be treated.*

There is but too much reason for such an enquiry, since the salvation both of the penitent and ghostly father lies at stake. The penitent's, because continually relapsing into the same crimes, there is great reason for concluding that he is not truly sorry when he comes to confession; it being scarce morally possible that a man should be so often truly sorry for what he never corrects in himself. Hence, it is much to be feared that many of his confessions are invalid, and that not being absolved from his sins, he is in a state of perdition, whilst he imagines himself to be in the way to heaven. The ghostly father's salvation too is at stake, since the duty of his charge requires of him not to profane a sacrament, by absolving a penitent, whom he has reason to think not worthily disposed. He is, moreover, indispensably obliged to promote the amendment of his penitent, in regard of whom he is a father and a physician, as well as a judge.

For answer to such an important question, we shall here set down how the confessor ought to behave with a penitent involved in habitual sin, to the end that the penitent, being well apprised of it, may willingly submit to the judgment of his confessor, and to what he shall appoint, in order to free himself from the dreadful state of habitual sin.

First then, if a penitent accuse himself of a sin, which he has frequently committed since his last confession, the confessor must examine whether it be a sin of habit, and how long the penitent has been subject to it. If he be his confessor in ordinary he may recollect; if not, he must enquire of the penitent. When he finds that it is a sin of habit, and that the penitent has frequently accused himself of it without amendment, he must examine into his behaviour during those relapses. If he discovers that the habit is not inveterate, that the penitent regrets his being engaged therein, that he has laboured to free himself, that he has often confessed it with due sorrow and full purpose of amendment: if the penitent has frequently overcome some temptations, though he may sometimes have yielded to others; if he has punctually complied with his confessor's directions; if he has carefully avoided the occasions of sin: then the confessor may judge favourably of him, absolving him of his relapses, provided he expresses great regret for what is past, a sincere design of amendment, and willingly accepts

cepts of the penance aſſigned for ſatisfying divine juſtice, as well as for his own amendment.

But if on the contrary, the confeſſor, in examining into his penitent's conduct, finds the habit to be ſtrong and inveterate, the penitent little concerned at his condition, few or no pains taken to free himſelf, that when he has confeſſed the ſame ſins before, it was not purely with a deſign of forſaking them, but only through cuſtom upon an approaching great feſtival, or ſome other motive than that of his amendment and ſalvation, that he ſoon relapſed again after his confeſſions, with the ſame facility as before, that he has neglected to practiſe what was enjoined him for his penance and reformation, or performed it negligently, that he has taken no care to avoid the occaſions of ſin, and has ſeldom or never reſiſted the temptations to it: if the confeſſor, I ſay, finds the ſtate of the penitent to be ſuch, he ought to conclude that he is not worthily diſpoſed for receiving abſolution, that he ought not in conſcience to grant it, and that if he ſhould, he is wanting to his duty as a confeſſor, and the care he is obliged to take of his penitent's ſalvation.

*A confeſſor wanting to his duty as a judge.*

He is wanting to his duty, becauſe in quality of judge, he ought to examine whether the penitent be worthy of abſolution, which he is not to give, unleſs he finds him rightly diſpoſed by a ſincere contrition for his ſins. Whereas, in the caſe before us, he has all the reaſon in the world to think the contrary, and cannot take the penitent's word, when he declares he is ſorry for his ſins, he having ſaid as much in his former confeſſions without any amendment. This is a ſufficient reaſon for judging his contrition ſuperficial, it being impoſſible, as we obſerved above, that the repentance of any evil can be always ſincere, when it is wilfully repeated after expreſſing ſuch ſorrow. Hence, the confeſſor, in abſolving his penitent on his bare word after ſo many relapſes, expoſes himſelf to an evident danger of giving abſolution to one unworthy, and voluntarily joining with him in committing a ſacrilege.

*A confeſſor wanting to his duty, as a phyſician.*

He is likewiſe wanting to that charitable care he is obliged, as a father and a phyſician, to take of his penitent's ſalvation; becauſe in giving him abſolution in ſuch a ſtate, he leaves him in a falſe opinion of being abſolved, when he really is not, and encourages him in a criminal neglect, in which he has long

continued

continued, of not labouring for his salvation by a serious amendment of life. Experience too plainly shews the little concern of such penitents in correcting their faults after confession is over. They presently forget their good resolutions, and relapse into the very sins they had so lately confessed: which would not happen, if their confessors employed the proper means of deterring them. The best and most assured means is to give time for trying the sincerity of their contrition by their resisting temptations, and forming frequent and interior acts of penance through regret for having offended God, and exercising exterior penitential acts, as prayer, fasting, and alms.

*The advantage of refusing absolution to habitual sinners.*

Such works of penance dispose penitents to a valid remission of their sins by a sacramental absolution, the delay of which makes them enter into themselves; they often discover that they never before thought of an amendment of life, or at least in a very superficial manner. This reflection makes them apprehend the validity of their former confessions: they are convinced that there is a necessity of rectifying what is amiss, by a good confession, accompanied with the necessary conditions for an amendment of their lives. Such is the advantage arising from this conduct of prudent confessors to their penitents who submit to it. You will experience this, dear *Theotime*, if, having had the misfortune of being engaged in a habit of sin, the goodness of God should bless you with a confessor who follows this method. Such a one you will seek after, if you seriously think of saving your soul, and freeing yourself from the wretched tyranny of habitual mortal sins, which too often lead to impenitence and final perdition.

I know the generality of Christians exclaim against this conduct of prudent directors. The deferring of absolution sounds harsh, and gives offence. They expect to be absolved the moment they have confessed, imagining themselves always well disposed, though perhaps oftentimes they have not so much as thought of the regret they should have for their sins, or of the obligation they are under of correcting their faults. They cry, the confessor ought to believe their asseveration, that they would not come to confession if they did not intend an amendment, that God has promised pardon to the sinner who returns to him, that *Jesus Christ* bid St. *Peter* pardon not only seven times, but seventy times seven, that is, always, that they may die during such a delay of absolution, which consequently

quently would be the cauſe of their damnation. Theſe are the pretences which a falſe prudence uſually ſuggeſts to men's minds, in order to flatter them in their vices, and prevent their amendment.

But you, dear *Theotime*, muſt not act thus. Be convinced that there is a wide difference between the dictates of that prudence, which St. *Paul* calls carnal, and a truly Chriſtian prudence, which is a gift of God, and is guided by charity. *This* directs penitents to the proper means for the flying from ſin, and the ſlavery of a vitious habit, which leads to perdition: *that*, by making them apprehend and abhor all methods of withdrawing from ſin, inclines them to ſeek out ways for obtaining ſalvation without an amendment of life. They imagine, that nothing more is required than to confeſs from time to time, and to be waſhed from their ſins as faſt as they commit them, making their whole lives one continued ſeries of confeſſing and relapſing, at the end of which they flatter themſelves with gaining heaven, as if they had taken true pains to deſerve it.

This is an error and deluſion very common in the Chriſtian world, which detain men in vice, and lead to final impenitence. It is partly owing to the ignorance of penitents, and the little concern they have for the ſalvation of their ſouls. It may likewiſe be attributed to ſuch confeſſors as are not ſufficiently inſtructed in, or convinced of the truths we have advanced above, nor of thoſe ſtrict obligations of their tremendous miniſtry, which forbid the conferring of a ſacrament on the unworthy, and make them anſwerable for the ſalvation of their penitents. Such confeſſors readily abſolve them from their ſins as often as they confeſs, after numberleſs relapſes, and many confeſſions which they have made in vain without receiving the remiſſion of their ſins, and which the penitents themſelves own to have been invalid, when they come to reflect on their deceitful reſolutions of amendment.

Theſe confeſſors ground their negligence or fatal condeſcenſion on the reaſons objected above by their penitents. If thoſe reaſons are of no force, it will be manifeſt that both the one and the other are groſly deceived. This we ſhall ſhow in the following chapter.

CHAP.

## CHAP. XII.

### *An objection answered.*

*1st objection.* THE first reason alledged for absolving without any difficulty such as are in a habit of mortal sin, as often as they come to confession, is drawn from this maxim, that the confessor is bound to believe his penitent when he says, that he is sorry for having offended God, and resolved to do so no more for the future. This obligation is supposed to be grounded on this, that as the penitent is his own accuser in confession, and the confessor is obliged to believe him as to his sins, he ought also to credit him when he says, that he is sorry and designs to amend; there being the same reason for believing the one as the other. They also add that it is a received maxim among divines, *that a penitent ought equally to be credited both for and against himself.*

*Answer.* As this maxim is the great support of the opinion we here oppose, it will not be amiss to discuss it with accuracy, in order to show how ill it is applied.

*It is difficult to know the true state of habitual sinners.* First, if this doctrine be true, it will follow, that the administering of the sacrament of penance is attended with far less difficulty than the wisest directors generally pretend. If the confessor be bound to believe his penitent on his bare word, that he is sorry for his sins, all he has to do is only to assign a penance, and give him absolution, a thing so easily done, that the most ignorant confessors may perform it equally well as the best qualified for that office. To what purpose then is so much prudence generally required in confessors? For though some discretion be necessary to know the nature of the penitent's crimes, to ask such questions as may be necessary, and no others, and appoint a suitable penance; it is certain, that the greatest difficulty is to discover the present state of the penitent's conscience, in order to know whether he be truly disposed for receiving absolution. Here so much prudence is requisite, that even the ablest directors are often perplexed how to proceed.

Secondly, it is surprising, that in so important an affair, as that of salvation, confessors and penitents should rely on a maxim, which

which would be set aside in any temporal concern. A man would be pointed at who relied on the word of another, who was notorious for a frequent breach of promise. No creditor will take a debtor's word after repeated promises of payment which have proved ineffectual. Every one suspects that man's sincerity who has been many times pardoned for that very fault for which he pretended to be sorry. And though he may be disposed otherwise to pardon him again, yet prudence, and even charity itself will suggest proper precautions to prevent being imposed on and injured afresh. Thus do men behave in the concerns of this life: and in confession, where salvation is depending, can it be required that the confessor should rely on the penitent's word which he has often broken? Less diffidence is shown in accepting a promise of not offending God again, than between man and man, where some trifle is at stake; and consequently the salvation of the penitent is hazarded on his bare word, when it might be secured by proper precautions, and applying the means of restoring him to the grace of God, and amending his past life.

*They who frequently break their word are no longer to be credited.*

Thirdly, that we may sift this matter to the bottom, I answer, that the general rule which directs the confessor to believe his penitent, when he says he is sorry for his sins, and is resolved to forsake them, if understood in a general sense without restriction, is false in itself, and highly pernicious to the salvation of souls. It is false, because contrition being an essential part of the sacrament, the confessor is absolutely obliged to examine whether that, which the penitent asserts in words, is so in effect. It is prejudicial to the salvation of souls, because it opens a wide gate to numberless bad confessions, as well in regard of the penitents, who are overjoyed to obtain absolution easily, as in regard of the confessors, who are inclined to follow a maxim which frees them from the trouble of examining into the state of their penitents, giving any uneasiness, or creating any dislike of themselves. And such bad confessions, besides the crime of sacrilege, keep souls in a perpetual impenitence, which leads to damnation.

*To give easy credit to habitual sinners is fatal to salvation.*

The proposition therefore is no longer true, than it is accompanied with proper circumstances. In which sense I assert, that a confessor ought to believe his penitent when he is morally certain he has in his heart that contrition he utters from his lips: but this

this certainty cannot be attained without examining into several things.

*Method of examining habitual sinners.*

First, whether the penitent in saying he is sorry for his sins, does not speak without reflection or meaning, and through a custom of saying so in confession, which is the case of too many penitents.

Secondly, whether the sorrow, the penitent expresses for his sins, does not proceed wholly from some worldly consideration, as shame, or some temporal inconvenience arising from his crimes. This happens but too often, through the ignorance of penitents, who never think of being grieved for their sins on a supernatural motive, as for the loss of God Almighty's friendship and their own eternal salvation, much less on account of the infinite injury done to their Creator. They frequent confession without thinking of either of these supernatural motives. This the confessor ought to examine into, when the penitent says he regrets his past sins.

Thirdly, when the penitent, either of his own accord, or prompted by his confessor, says he is sorry for his sins on either of these motives, the confessor must discover in what manner he utters this, to know if he be really so affected. Any penitent will readily answer, *yes*, when his confessor asks if he is sorry for having offended God; but this regret is much sooner uttered from the lips, than formed in the heart. Penitents frequently answer the question without reflecting on what they say. This likewise the confessor must examine into, and take due pains to instil into his penitent a supernatural sorrow and regret for his sins, founded on such motives as our faith has revealed.

Fourthly, though the penitent should say he is sorry for his sins on account of losing through them the friendship of God, or for the injury done to him, yet the confessor must examine whether he be fully resolved to correct his past failings. Penitents, subject to relapses, are apt enough to say they are sorry, but when asked if they are resolved to forsake their sins entirely, which true contrition necessarily implies, they hesitate and answer but faintly. They will say perhaps in general, that they will endeavour; but when particulars are insisted upon, when they are told such and such darling sins must be avoided, such and such means put in practice, certain occasions, which have been fatal, laid aside; they are at a stand, and nothing is to be got from them but faint and imperfect promises, which are certain marks of the little sor-

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row they have for their ſins; and which cannot be ſincere, if a firm purpoſe of amendment is wanting. This the confeſſor muſt examine into, eſpecially in the caſe of ſuch as live in a habit of mortal ſin.

*The contrition of habitual ſinners to be ſuſpected.*

It is not true therefore that the confeſſor muſt credit his penitent's bare word, when he ſays he is ſorry for having offended God. He muſt thoroughly examine every thing, and be morally aſſured that his penitent regrets his ſins on the motives above-mentioned, and that he has a ſincere will to amend, and to perform whatever ſhall be appointed for that purpoſe. Thus we muſt underſtand that general maxim, *that the confeſſor ought to believe his penitent, as well when he ſays he is ſorry for his ſins, as when he accuſes himſelf.* He ought to credit him in both caſes, when he has no juſt reaſon for calling in queſtion the truth of what he ſays; and as he muſt not believe the penitent, when, in accuſing himſelf, it appears that ſomething is concealed, either through ſhame or a want of examining his conſcience, ſo he ought not to credit him as to contrition, when there are reaſons, ſuch as we have ſpecified, to ſuſpect it.

*The duty of a director towards habitual ſinners.*

This ſo ſtrict and indiſpenſable obligation on the confeſſor's part, to examine into the interior ſtate of the penitent as far as may morally be done, ariſes from his acting in quality of a judge by the appointment of the Son of God, and his having received a power of retaining as well as remitting ſin. As judge, he ought not to pronounce ſentence without knowing the merits of the penitent. Now, in order to it, he muſt examine him with the greateſt circumſpection poſſible, more eſpecially in regard of habitual ſinners, becauſe he has reaſon to doubt of their diſpoſition.

Again, he is obliged to this ſcrutiny by virtue of that power he has received for retaining ſins: for it is evident this power does not barely extend itſelf only to refuſe abſolution to ſuch as are manifeſtly unworthy, but alſo to refuſe or delay it in regard of thoſe whoſe diſpoſition may be called in queſtion; otherwiſe ſuch power would be almoſt uſeleſs, if it extended no farther than to ſuch as are notoriouſly incapable of receiving it. For in that caſe, it is not the confeſſor who retains the ſins, but the penitent, by rendering himſelf unworthy of the remiſſion of them.

From

From all which we muſt draw this concluſion, that penitents have no right to inſiſt upon abſolution, barely by ſaying they are ſorry for their ſins, and deſign an amendment of life; but rather that they are obliged to ſubmit the judgment of their diſpoſition to their confeſſor, and comply with what he ſhall appoint for obtaining more convincing proofs of it. Hence ſuch confeſſors who follow that maxim, and abſolve their penitents on no other aſſurance of their good diſpoſition but their bare aſſertion, are wanting to their duty, and accountable to God for their negligence in examining into the diſpoſition of their penitents, and haſtineſs in abſolving the unworthy. Neither will that abſolution avail, which is not ratified in heaven.

Did directors but remember the qualities in which they act, not only as judges, but alſo as phyſicians, and ſpiritual fathers of their penitents, their conduct would differ widely from what it generally is. Not only as judges, they would be careful not to abſolve ſuch as are unworthy; but, as phyſicians of the ſoul, they would preſcribe the proper remedies for healing their habitual diſtempers, among which one of the moſt efficacious is the delay of abſolution. This delay is frequently neceſſary, in as much as ſinners are not duly diſpoſed for receiving it. In the quality of fathers, their paternal love would temper mildneſs with ſeverity for bringing ſuch children to a right ſenſe of their duty.

But if the great qualities of judge, father, and phyſician, with their heavy obligations, move not confeſſors, at leaſt let them remember the dreadful menace God denounced againſt one of his prophets, and in him againſt all who are entruſted with the care of ſouls. He ſays, that he will demand of them the ſouls of ſuch ſinners as they have not admoniſhed of the divine vengeance due to their crimes. Hear his very words, which well deſerve your greateſt attention. *Son of man, I have made thee a watchman to the houſe of Iſrael: and thou ſhalt hear the word out of my mouth, and ſhalt tell it them from me. If, when I ſay to the wicked, thou ſhalt ſurely die: thou declare it not to him, nor ſpeak* to him, *that he may be converted from his wicked way, and live: the ſame wicked man ſhall die in his iniquity, but I will require his blood at thy hand**. Theſe words plainly intimate, that God will take vengeance for the loſs of a ſinner, on him who contributes to it by a criminal ſilence and indulgence. If

*Careleſs directors threatened with God's vengeance.*

* Ezech. iii. 17, 18.

If confeſſors, who are criminally indulgent to their penitents, would but often meditate on theſe terrible words addreſſed particularly to them, they would diſcharge themſelves in a different manner of the indiſpenſable obligation they are under of taking care in confeſſion of their penitents ſalvation. They would not content themſelves with ſlightly admoniſhing them to amend their lives, but they would employ all neceſſary means for promoting ſuch an amendment, of which God has given them charge, and will exact a rigorous account at the day of judgment.

## CHAP. XIII.

### *Other objections anſwered.*

*2d objection.*

IT appears almoſt needleſs to make any reply to thoſe, who alledge that the confeſſor ought to judge favourably of his penitent: that he muſt not too eaſily conclude he is impoſed on: that he ſhould believe his penitent deſigns an amendment of life, when he prevails on himſelf to confeſs his ſins, which often is attended with great difficulty.

This objection is ſo very weak, that it ſcarce deſerves any notice. It is but too true that penitents, through a groſs ignorance, endeavour to impoſe on their confeſſors for obtaining abſolution, by virtue of which they falſely imagine themſelves to be juſtified from their ſins. Even thoſe who do not ſeek to deceive their confeſſors, frequently deceive themſelves, in ſuppoſing themſelves to be well diſpoſed, when they are far from it; of this the confeſſor, not the penitent, is the proper judge. As to what is ſaid, that the confeſſor ought to believe that the penitent purpoſes his amendment by coming to confeſſion: this might be allowed, provided penitents never had other motives for coming to confeſſion; but it is well known they often have, ſuch as the command of the church for annual confeſſion, ſome great feſtival, a cuſtom of doing it at certain times, the rules of a confraternity, ſometimes human reſpects, to gain the applauſe of men, or avoid their cenſures if they keep away at ſtated times. All theſe motives make it evident, that an amendment of life is not always the principal motive of going to

*Anſwer.*

*Habitual ſinners often deceive themſelves and their directors.*

confeſſion, and experience teaches, that it is often done without any ſuch thought.

*3d objection.*

There is another objection, more ſpecious indeed, but equally falſe with the former. It is drawn from the ſcripture, where God promiſes pardon to thoſe who return to him by repentance, and that ſin ſhall not hurt the ſinner from the moment of his converſion*. From whence it is inferred, that ſince the ſinner may be converted in an inſtant, he ought not to be refuſed abſolution, when he ſays he is converted, and deſigns to correct his faults.

*Anſwer.*

It is eaſily anſwered, that the inference would be true, provided the confeſſor was morally aſſured of the ſincerity of his penitent's converſion. But as there is great reaſon to doubt it in regard of habitual ſinners, his duty obliges him to take all neceſſary precautions before he gives abſolution. And the ſcripture is ſo far from condemning this practice, that it actually recommends it. See the marks of a ſincere repentance and a true penitent ſet down by God Almighty, in the eighteenth chapter of the prophet *Ezechiel*. *If the wicked do penance for all his ſins, and keep all my commandments, and do judgment and juſtice, living he ſhall live, and ſhall not die. I will not remember all his inquities, that he hath done.* And again: *When the wicked turneth himſelf away from his wickedneſs, and doth judgment and juſtice: he ſhall ſave his ſoul alive*†. What can be meant by doing penance for all his ſins, and departing from his iniquities, unleſs looking upon them with horror and abomination? And can a penitent be ſaid to act thus, who accuſes himſelf of habitual ſins, as he has often done, without being moved, having little or no concern about an amendment of life? What is it to do judgment and juſtice, if it be not to judge and condemn himſelf as guilty in the ſight of God whom he has offended, by ſubmitting to all the puniſhment due to divine juſtice, and to the reparation of the injury done to him? Does a penitent act thus who thinks himſelf worthy of abſolution, who inſiſts upon it, and requires it from his confeſſor after ſo many repeated abuſes? God has promiſed to pardon the ſinner who returns to him, but he muſt return with a mind humbled by the horror of his crimes; he muſt *ſeek him with all* his

*Habitual ſinners not to be abſolved till they give proof of a ſincere converſion.*

* Ezech. xxxiii. 12. † Ezech. xviii. 21, 22, 27.

his *heart, and all the affliction of* his *ſoul* *. Where is the humble and contrite heart of him who accuſes himſelf of repeated ſins of habit? Where is his converſion of heart? How does it appear that he is changed, that he no longer ſeeks the pleaſure he purſued before, that he now deteſts the things he was ſo fond of, and for which he abandoned his Creator and laſt end? I own that, if he be in this diſpoſition which God requires, he deſerves abſolution, and that the confeſſor ought not to refuſe him what God has granted. Notwithſtanding I maintain that if he be really in this diſpoſition, he will readily ſubmit to whatever his confeſſor, who is not yet ſufficiently aſſured of it, ſhall appoint for that end. The more contrite he is, the more he will think himſelf unworthy of abſolution, and of his own accord will aſk a longer time, that by penitential works, he may diſpoſe himſelf for receiving ſo ineſtimable a favour.

*4th objection.*

There is another objection drawn from the ſcripture, but with as little foundation as the laſt: they ſay our bleſſed Redeemer ordered St. *Peter* to pardon injuries ſeventy times ſeven, that is, always †; from whence the trite maxim among eaſy confeſſors of *toties quoties*, that is, as often as the penitent comes to confeſſion.

*Anſwer.*

If thoſe, who alledge that paſſage, would take the trouble to read it; they would ſoon diſcover how much they wreſt the ſenſe of it; for it entirely regards injuries received from others, which we are to pardon as often as they are done. The text is clear: St. *Peter* inquires of our Saviour how often he ought to forgive his neighbour who injures him? If ſeven times? Our Lord anſwers, *I ſay not to thee, till ſeven times; but till ſeventy times ſeven times* ‡: that is, as often as it happens. Conſequently the paſſage no way regards the remiſſion of ſin in the ſacrament of penance, where the confeſſor forgives the offence committed againſt God, not any perſonal injury againſt himſelf.

*Directors cannot without injuſtice abſolve habitual ſinners.*

But if from this commandment of pardoning injuries, any one ſhould infer that confeſſors may abſolve without heſitation the crimes committed againſt God, he would reaſon very ill. For a man is maſter of what concerns himſelf, but a confeſſor is not ſo in regard



* Deut. iv. 29. † Mat. xviii. 22. ‡ Mat. xviii. 22.

of offences againſt God, to pardon them at pleaſure, but is tied up to certain conditions, one of which is a ſincere contrition in the penitent, and this the confeſſor muſt endeavour to diſcover. So that all that can be gathered from this text is, that as God ſets no bounds to his mercy, but pardons all who offend him, as often as they return with a truly penitential ſpirit, the confeſſor ought to abſolve his penitent as often as he confeſſes with the requiſite diſpoſitions: and this no one diſputes. But the confeſſor ought to know that the penitent has ſuch diſpoſitions, and muſt employ the neceſſary means for that end; and conſequently the paſſage alledged proves nothing. Nay, if it proves any thing in this caſe, it proves too much, *viz.* that the confeſſor ought to abſolve the penitent, though he ſhows no ſigns of regret for his ſins, ſince we are obliged to pardon our neighbour even when he is not ſorry for the injury done us: which conſequence is utterly falſe.

*5th objection.* There remains one difficulty to be anſwered, which, at firſt ſight, carries ſome weight with it. The delay of abſolution, it is alledged, often diſguſts penitents, and creates in them an averſion to the ſacrament of penance, ſo that they ſeldom return at the time appointed, which gives them an occaſion of remaining ſo much the longer in their ſins, and conſequently does more harm than good. They add, that confeſſion being of itſelf attended with great difficulties, it is improper to encreaſe them by the delay of abſolution.

*Anſwer.* I anſwer firſt, that if ſome penitents are diſguſted by abſolution being delayed on juſt motives, it is to be attributed to the novelty of it. Theſe have always met with confeſſors who abſolved them without heſitation, notwithſtanding their repeated relapſes. Thus confeſſors are in the fault, who ought rather to correct their too great indulgence, than juſtify it by an evil of which they themſelves are the cauſe.

*True penitents readily acquieſce in delay of abſolution if judged neceſſary.* I anſwer ſecondly, that if this happens to ſome penitents, as no doubt but it does, ſince moſt of ſuch are neither rightly diſpoſed nor inſtructed; there are many others who are ſatisfied as to the delay of abſolution, when the neceſſity of it and the advantage it affords towards their ſalvation are properly explained to them. Did confeſſors diſcharge themſelves well of their duty in this particular, by making

ing their penitents ſenſible of their reaſons for deferring abſolution, thou would find far leſs repugnance in them than they imagine. God giving a bleſſing to their good intentions will diſpoſe the hearts of their penitents to agree to ſuch a proper and ſalutary regulation.

Thirdly I anſwer, that in regard of thoſe penitents who are diſpleaſed with ſuch conduct in their confeſſors; it is arguing very ill, to ſay it ought not to be obſerved, becauſe they are apt to take offence at it; for if it be, as it frequently is, abſolutely neceſſary, it muſt be purſued notwithſtanding their repugnance. The duty of a confeſſor indiſpenſably requires, that abſolution be refuſed to thoſe who are unworthy: if the penitent is diſguſted, the blame muſt lie at his own door, and not at the confeſſor's.

*Reaſons for not abſolving habitual ſinners.*

He ought to remonſtrate that he cannot give him abſolution where there is a want of diſpoſition: that if he did, it would only ſerve to render the penitent more criminal in the ſight of God: that ſo many confeſſions, without any amendment, may be juſtly ſuſpected: that the penitent ought to think of repairing what is paſt, by a valid, and even a general confeſſion of his whole life. He will often find that his penitent will yield to his remonſtrances; or if they have not their deſired effect immediately, time may bring it about. At leaſt the confeſſor does his duty, and obeys the word of God, which commands him to reprove the iniquity of the ſinner, and warn him of the vengeance hanging over his head. If the penitent makes a right uſe of this, the confeſſor will have the comfort of having contributed to it; if not, he has cleared himſelf from the juſt reproaches he might otherwiſe expect from his Creator. This is what God has declared by the Prophet *Ezechiel**; for after having ſaid that the Prophet, who does not admoniſh the ſinner to return to his duty, ſhall be accountable for his loſs; he adds, that the Prophet who diſcharges his duty, though without effect, ſhall ſave his own ſoul; but the ſinner ſhall periſh for having ſlighted his admonitions.

*6th objection.*

As to what is alledged that the difficulties which attend confeſſion ought not to be encreaſed by a delay of abſolution, which may be more inſupportable to the penitent than confeſſion itſelf: I anſwer, that this is true when ſuch a delay is not neceſſary through evident danger of profaning

*Anſwer.*



* Ezech. iii. 19.

the ſacrament, or for the penitent's amendment. In either of theſe caſes, the delay of abſolution muſt ſtill be continued, notwithſtanding any difficulties that may ariſe. It would be folly to aſſert, that a ſecond remedy muſt not be preſcribed becauſe the ſick perſon found a difficulty in taking the firſt: a phyſician who acts thus, expoſes himſelf to the ridicule of mankind. A confeſſor is obliged to mitigate ſuch a remedy as much as poſſible, and employ it with diſcretion. But to neglect it for fear of afflicting or diſobliging his penitent, would be to act like a phyſician, who ſuffers his patient to die rather than preſcribe a remedy he diſlikes, though his recovery, perhaps his life depends upon it. Thus it is ſo far from being true, that abſolution ought not to be delayed by reaſon of the difficulty penitents find in confeſſing their ſins, that, on the contrary, if they have ſuch a difficulty, care muſt be taken that they do not loſe their labour, which would be the caſe if, through a haſty abſolution, they did not obtain pardon for their ſins, or did not amend their lives.

*Abſolution muſt not be given to habitual ſinners for fear of their diſpleaſure.*

I anſwer ſecondly, that if confeſſion be attended with difficulty, it is only in regard of thoſe who are ignorant of the great advantages accruing from it, ſuch as the forgiveneſs of ſins deſerving eternal damnation, the being reconciled to God, the peace of conſcience, the great helps obtained for perſevering in the grace of God, both through the efficacy of the ſacrament, and the good advice given by the confeſſor. Thoſe who weigh well theſe advantages obtained by confeſſion, are not concerned much about the trouble ariſing from an acknowledgment of their ſins, but only how to prevent their confeſſions being fruitleſs or hurtful, as they will certainly be, if they receive abſolution without being worthily diſpoſed.

*Advantages accruing from confeſſion.*

*7th objection.* Another objection againſt the delaying of abſolution is, that oftentimes it is impracticable: for inſtance, in the confeſſions of ſick perſons, eſpecially when in danger of death: where perſons are under a neceſſity of communicating on the ſame or following day, as children who go to their devotions at the ſame time with their parents: when the penitent lives in a houſe where general communions on certain feſtivals are obſerved, and ſuch like occaſions, when they pretend confeſſors cannot defer abſolution. I anſwer again,

again, that these particular cases prove nothing in regard of such as are not in those circumstances, consequently our maxim concerning the delay of absolution to those who are in a habit of sin, is still in force in all other cases. Every one sees how ill that person must reason, who concludes, that absolution must never be deferred, because an urgent necessity sometimes requires it to be given, as in the case of sickness or imminent danger of death.

*Answer.*

*Absolution when not to be deferred in danger of death.*

But to answer to the case proposed; a confessor may and ought to absolve a sick person, though in a habit of sin, *provided he shows sufficient sorrow:* because he is obliged to secure the salvation of the penitent, and at such a time he has no other means of doing it, than by absolving him on the testimony he then gives of his contrition.

*8th objection.*

He is at least *then* obliged, you will say, to credit the penitent, and why not at another time?

*Answer.*

*Dying sinners to be treated differently from those in health.*

I answer that there is a wide difference between a sick penitent and one in health. The first can give no other proofs of his contrition than bare words, and therefore the confessor must believe him in those circumstances. But the latter is capable of giving more convincing proofs of his repentance by suitable actions. As he has frequently broken his promise of amendment, the confessor ought not to rely on what he says, without some signs of a real amendment, as we have shown before.

Nevertheless, it must be allowed that the confession of a sick man, in the habit of mortal sin, is very perplexing on account of the difficulty of being morally assured that he is sincerely sorry for his sins. Discreet confessors use all the precaution possible not to mistake. Sensible as they are on one side of the danger the sick man is in, they employ all means that can contribute to move him to contrition and a sincere return to God, in order to give him absolution with as much safety as the case will allow. Considering also that he may possibly recover, they are careful in prescribing every thing necessary for an amendment of life, if God should please to restore his health.

*9th objection.*

As for the other instances, wherein the difficulty of delaying absolution is asserted: I an-

*Answer.* swer, that the confessor must endeavour to suggest to them some prudent means of avoiding communion. If this be not feasible the first time they apply to him, he must exert himself in disposing them to a due regret for their sins, and must assign the proper methods of avoiding the like till their next confession. If they make a right use of this advice, and show it by some amendment, the confessor may again absolve them, as we said in the foregoing chapter. But if they have made little or no progress towards an amendment of life, he ought to observe the maxim of not absolving penitents he has reason to think unworthy, and suggest to them how they may abstain from the holy communion without being pointed at.

*Habitual sinners giving proofs of amendment may be absolved, and not otherwise.*

The best remedy for preventing these inconveniences is for parents to signify to their children, that they are at liberty to communicate when they think fit with their director's advice: and for superiors to content themselves with exhorting such as are committed to their care to frequent communion, but not obliging them to it any oftner than their confessors judge proper. The church herself has taken this prudent measure in assigning fifteen days for the *Easter* communion. Inspired as she is by the Holy Ghost, and knowing very well, that it may frequently happen that penitents will not be duly disposed in that space of time, she has left it to the discretion of confessors to defer the communion to a longer time. This she has declared when she says, "that "the faithful shall communicate at *Easter; unless it be deferred by* "*the advice of the confessor on a reasonable motive**." This restriction shows how little ground there is to alledge the obligation of paschal communion, for proving that absolution ought not to be deferred at least at that time; since the church allows of such a delay, and thereby supposes the confessor may have just reasons for it.

*Important remark.*

There remains but one difficulty to be resolved, which is often started by penitents when their confessors are for deferring absolution: they alledge that they may die during that time, and then they are lost for ever. We may well be astonished at the ingenuity of mankind in deceiving

*10th objection.*

*Answer.*

* Conc. Lateran. iv. Can. 21.

ceiving themselves. They, whose life is a continued series of relapses into grievous crimes, are not afraid of dying for weeks, months, nay whole years, though in a state of sin and damnation, yet dread death during a few weeks employed in avoiding sin, and obtaining mercy by their sighs and penitential works! They are not afraid of dying whilst in the very act of offending God, when his vengeance is ready to fall upon them, yet they apprehend it when they are endeavouring to appease him! They insist upon absolution to secure their salvation, but will not dispose themselves by works of repentance for receiving absolution in such a manner as that they may depend upon it. An hasty absolution, extorted by importunity or circumvention, makes them easy in a false peace of conscience, without reflecting that absolution from man is of no force, unless ratified by heaven; and that unless they are worthily disposed, God condemns them at the same instant in which they are absolved by the priest.

*Possibility of death overtaking us no reason for not delaying absolution.*

Finally, in answer to this objection, I say, the church knew that men were mortal, when she deferred giving baptism to *Catechumens*, and absolution to penitents. The apprehension of their dying without baptism or absolution, did not hinder her from requiring time to be duly disposed for the reception of either of these sacraments. She had just grounds to hope, that, through the mercy of God, the *Catechumens* and penitents would not die without the sacrament, or that their penitental works, joined to an ardent desire of receiving it, would obtain for them the grace of perfect contrition, which would justify them in the sight of God, without an actual participation of the sacrament. This such penitents may hope for, who labour seriously to dispose themselves by a contrite heart and penitential works, for receiving absolution for their sins: and therefore the fear of dying ought not to prevent their submitting to their confessors when they judge it necessary to defer absolution; but rather such an apprehension should excite them to a punctual compliance with whatever is enjoined them for disposing them to receive it worthily, that thereby they may be re-instated in the grace of God, and the way to heaven.

To conclude all we have said for the advantage and even necessity of not giving absolution to penitents who live in habitual sin, but rather obliging them to employ some time in preparing themselves;

ſelves; I beg, *Theotime*, you would conſider, whether penitents, who oppoſe ſuch a diſcreet conduct, do it with a deſign of changing and amending their lives, or rather in order to go on in indulging their vitious habits? You will find their intent is not to correct their faults, but the better to indulge their evil inclinations. You may judge from yourſelf, if ever you were enſlaved to a habit of ſin, and you will own yourſelf to have very ſeldom ſeriouſly reſolved, when at confeſſion, to amend your life. Wherefore, if ſuch be your caſe at preſent, I conjure you to enter into yourſelf in order to conſider the imminent danger to which your ſalvation is expoſed. Recollect how many bad confeſſions you may have made during ſuch a habit, having often confeſſed without any true ſorrow or deſign of amendment. How often have you imagined yourſelf abſolved, when it has been far otherwiſe! And this through your own fault, having ſought after eaſy confeſſors who made no difficulty, notwithſtanding repeated relapſes, to abſolve you; and perhaps you have forſaken thoſe whoſe conduct would have better ſecured to you the remiſſion of your ſins, and put you in the right path to heaven. If this be the caſe, dear *Theotime*, remain not any longer in ſuch a wretched ſtate: fly from the danger which ſurrounds you: repair your paſt bad confeſſions by one that is valid. Prepare for it by fulfilling all the neceſſary conditions, a ſincere ſorrow for your ſins, a firm reſolution of amendment, and a ready ſubmiſſion to what your director ſhall appoint.

*The contrition of habitual ſinners ſeldom ſincere.*

## CHAP. XIV.

### *Of the choice of a confeſſor.*

WERE penitents equally ſolicitous for the ſafety of their ſouls and obtaining eternal life, as they are when ſeized with ſickneſs, for the recovery of their health and ſecuring this mortal life, how unneceſſary would any advice be upon the ſubject of a choice of a confeſſor.

But alas! when the body is concerned, no one is ſatisfied with the phyſician next at hand, much leſs with him whom he thinks ignorant or unſkilful. None was ever heard to ſay, ſuch a one paſſes for a phyſician, and ought to know his buſineſs; if he does not, he is to blame not I, and muſt anſwer for it hereafter.

Own

Own the truth, *Theotime*, do you behave thus when afflicted with a ſerious illneſs? Or if you hear any one arguing thus, would you not conclude him to be mad? This admits of no diſpute.

No, no, *Theotime*, in the urgent neceſſity of a dangerous ſickneſs, the illiterate, unſkilful, or unexperienced phyſician is not ſought for: neither would he be thought leſs than mad, who ſhould prefer the judgment of the unlearned, when his malady required the moſt knowing artiſt.

*Few are equally anxious to have a ſkilful ſpiritual, as corporal phyſician.*

Yet this is the prepoſterous method of the generality of penitents in chooſing a confeſſor the phyſician of their ſouls, who is to free them from eternal perdition, and ſet them in the right way to heaven. They think the next at hand good enough for them. They ſay any confeſſor is ſufficient; if he were otherwiſe, he would not be entruſted with that function.

And thus it is with many, who ſeem fond of deluding themſelves with ſuch ſpecious pretences, which they would certainly reject if the health of their bodies were concerned.

They very juſtly make nice diſtinctions betwixt phyſicians and phyſicians. All indeed may be phyſicians, but they are not all equally ſo. There are ſome ſickneſſes more dangerous than others, that require the moſt eminent phyſicians. Many frequently die in the hands of the unſkilful. The ſame will hold good in the choice of a confeſſor.

But there are ſome who act ſtill worſe, and apply themſelves to thoſe whom they know to be the leaſt able either to diſcern or correct their vitious humours, or to let them ſee the number, greatneſs, and enormity of their paſt ſins, and to create in their ſouls an horror of them. They chooſe thoſe who are leaſt prudent in their preſcriptions, and leaſt capable of giving ſuitable admonitions, neceſſary advices, and other remedies againſt the maladies of the ſoul, the moſt indulgent in their penances, the moſt eaſy in reſolution of caſes of conſcience, thoſe in fine who dive leaſt into their conſciences, who paſs ſlightly over all things, are leaſt troubleſome in queſtions, give little or no advice, and that which they give only in general without deſcending to particulars, who ſatisfy themſelves with what is told them, and from a ſlight penance paſs on to abſolution, without examining whether the penitent be duly diſpoſed. And theſe are the confeſſors not only moſt followed, but moſt anxiouſly ſought after.

Now

*Blindneſs of penitents.*

Now is not this a deplorable blindneſs? Is not this willingly to extinguiſh the light of reaſon, that they may more freely and without remorſe of conſcience fall into the pit of hell?

Are not Chriſtians in a fatal ſituation to verify by their practices that grievous complaint which God once made againſt the *Jews? It is a people that provoketh to wrath, and lying children, children that will not hear the law of God. Who ſay to the ſeers: ſee not: and to them that behold: behold not for us thoſe things that are right: ſpeak unto us pleaſant things, ſee errors for us* *.

But what are the ill conſequences of the remiſſneſs of ſuch confeſſors to penitents? Their confeſſions become purely cuſtomary, not prompted by the ſpirit of penance; without ſhame and confuſion due to their ſins; without one ſerious thought of amendment. Thus they become buried in vice. Their whole lives are entirely made up of relapſes, and they run on in the high road to eternal perdition.

And whence all this? but from negligent, ignorant, looſe, or obſequious confeſſors; who reſemble thoſe *Prophets* of the *Jewiſh* people, to whom *Jeremy* attributes the cauſe of the deſolation of *Jeruſalem: Thy Prophets have ſeen falſe and fooliſh things for thee: and they have not laid open thy iniquity to excite thee to penance* †.

But if ſuch confeſſors are guilty of the corruption and damnation of Chriſtians; ſuch penitents are no leſs in fault, who make choice of ſuch confeſſors.

Therefore, O *Theotime*, be not ſo blind as to ſeek a director, who will ſuffer you without reſtraint to run headlong into the precipice. Aim by your confeſſion to ſet yourſelf in the right way to heaven, and let the choice of your guide be ſuch as may conduce to it by withdrawing you from vice, and conducting you to everlaſting life. We have told you in the 1ſt Vol. of this work, what you are to do in the choice of a director, Part II. Chap. V.

PART

* Iſai. xxx. 9, 10. † Lam. ii. 14.

# PART. V.

## *Of the preservation of grace after confession, against a relapse into sin.*

## CHAP. I.

### *Of the importance of this subject.*

I Treat here of the care penitents ought to take for continuing in the grace of God, after being reinstated in it by means of the sacrament of penance, because few consider it with the attention it justly deserves. The importance is sufficiently evinced, for that upon it the very fruit and end of the sacrament depends, which was not only instituted for the remission of sins, but for re-instating penitents in the way of salvation: now no one can continue in that way nor attain salvation, without preserving that grace by a faithful perseverance.

Is it not in reality an inexpressible benefit for a sinner to be restored to the grace of God, to be ranked anew in the number of the elect, and restored to the inheritance of the kingdom of heaven.

*Penance rendered useless by a relapse.*

But if this happy restoration be not preserved with care, but easily lost, though gained with trouble, what will it avail us? unless it be to render us more criminal in the sight of God, through the abuse of the sacrament, by depriving it of its chief effect; as *Tertullian* justly observes, when he says, "that the sacrament of penance is thrown away without a change of life, for "then it is deprived of that advantage for which God instituted it, "that is, the salvation of man *."

Where is there a malefactor, who, having been once pardoned a capital crime out of the pure clemency of his prince, dares by a repetition of his offence the very first opportunity to provoke the justice of an injured bounty by a second fault, much less by repeating it as often as he is pardoned?

A person but lately escaped from a dangerous illness, is extremely cautious in preventing a relapse that would still be more fatal than the first. It is only in distempers of the soul that a relapse is not dreaded,

* Lib. de pœnit. c. 2.

dreaded, though infinitely more pernicious and deſtructive than thoſe of the body.

Chriſtians dare to act with God, as they neither durſt nor would act with their ſovereign or even with their friend. For who is there that after a reconciliation is not afraid of repeating continually the ſame injuries againſt his friend after being pardoned, and does not endeavour to preſerve his friendſhip when reſtored to it? But if it ſhould happen ſo, every one would reaſonably judge that man to be a cheat and an impoſtor, who ſhould pretend to the name of friendſhip, and yet by a repetition of new offences continue to abuſe the good nature of his friend, and by frequent relapſes make his patience, the only ſubject of their mutual amity, and his facility in pardoning a reaſon for ridiculing him before all the world. Yet thus it is that ſinners treat with God. They confeſs thir ſins, aſk pardon, and time after time make their reconciliation with him by the ſacrament of penance; and for ſome few days they curb their evil inclinations; but alas! they preſently return to their former courſe, with leſs dread of loſing the favour of their Creator and ſovereign judge, than of diſpleaſing the leaſt of their friends.

Thus they paſs all their life in confeſſing from time to time, and continually returning to mortal ſin after confeſſion; ſo that their whole life ſeems to be but one, as it were, continued ſeries or ſucceſſion of relapſes into mortal ſin after confeſſion. As if this ſacrament were inſtituted only for the remiſſion of paſt ſins, and not at all to give us ſtrength to avoid them for the future.

*The aggravations inſeparable from a relapſe.*

Is it poſſible, *Theotime*, that Chriſtians, believing Chriſtians, ſhould be guilty of this diſorder? That men endued with the light of faith ſhould treat God after this unreaſonable and unworthy manner? Is this to underſtand the nature of the ſacrament of penance? Is this to believe that it is a ſacrament of reconciliation with God, not only for a time, but for ever? Is this to form a right judgment of his unlimited power, not to value his favour and friendſhip, but to forfeit it continually, and withdraw themſelves by cuſtom from that grace, to which by his pure mercy they have been admitted?

Did God only ſeldom and with much difficulty, receive us again into his favour after we had offended him, every one would ſtand upon his guard. One would be afraid of falling again into his diſ-favour, and to hazard eternal ſalvation by repeated relapſes.

But

But being we think that we ſhall be re-admitted into his favour when we pleaſe, and that there is no more to be done than to preſent ourſelves to him in the ſacrament of penance to receive the forgiveneſs of our ſins, we preſume to offend him on all occaſions. We make his goodneſs a freſh motive for offending him, and for holding his friendſhip in ſuch contempt, that we no ſooner are reconciled to God, than we baſely abandon him: an affront one would not offer to the moſt contemptible perſon living.

See then, *Theotime*, and conſider well of what great conſequence this ſubject is, and how it deſerves to be ſolidly treated, and requires your moſt ſerious conſideration, which I beg you will beſtow on the following chapters.

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## CHAP. II.

*How great an evil is the relapſe into ſin.*

WHAT I have already ſaid does ſufficiently evince, that a relapſe into ſin is an evil ſo great, that it ought to ſtrike us with horror. Yet that you may be the more fully perſuaded of it, hear how the Holy Ghoſt deſcribes the enormity of a relapſe into ſin.

*The evil of a relapſe expreſſed by the Holy Ghoſt.*

Firſt, the wiſe man * conſidering the greatneſs of this evil declares that he cannot behold it without a juſt indignation. He ſays, that there are two things, which when they happen grieve him very much; the one, to ſee a great warrior, after he has ſerved a long time, reduced to poverty: the other, to ſee a wiſe man deſpiſed, inſtead of being eſteemed according to his merit: but he adds, that the third he is not able to endure, and that it cauſes in him a tranſport of the higheſt wrath; that is, to ſee a man *that paſſeth over from* the ſtate of *juſtice* and ſanctity *to* that of *ſin*, and who abandons virtue to follow vice. He further aſſures us that God will make that perſon one day feel the effects of his juſtice.

In another place he exclaims againſt thoſe who forſake the path of virtue, and give themſelves over to vice. *Wo to them that have forſaken the right ways. What will they do when the Lord ſhall begin to examine* their ways, and all the actions of their lives †.

The

* Eccli. xxvi. 25, 26, 27. † Eccli. ii. 16.

The Apoſtle St. *Peter** inveighs with much zeal againſt thoſe who return to ſin after they have renounced it by the profeſſion of Chriſtianity, and declares *that their latter ſtate is become unto them worſe than the former*, from whence they were delivered by their converſion, which was a ſtate of darkneſs and ſin: That *it had been better for them not to have known the way of juſtice, than after they have known it, to turn back from that holy commandment, which was delivered to them. For, that of the true proverb hath happened to them, the dog is returned to his own vomit, and the ſow that was waſhed to her wallowing in the mire*†.

The council of *Trent* cited above in Part IV. Chap. III. deſcribes with much energy the enormity of their fault who relapſe into ſin after baptiſm, by pointing out four aggravating circumſtances, which are found in their firſt relapſe. The firſt is, that they ſin after that they have been *once* delivered from the ſlavery of ſin and the Devil. 2. That they ſin after they have received the grace of the Holy Ghoſt. 3. That they ſin with knowledge. 4. That in ſinning they violate the Temple of God, and contriſtate the Holy Ghoſt. If the firſt relapſe carries ſo much enormity with it, what muſt we think of frequent repetitions, perhaps throughout our whole life?

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## CHAP. III.

*Of three great indignities which are found in the ſins of relapſe, ingratitude, perfidiouſneſs, and contempt of God.*

THE firſt is a prodigious ingratitude towards God in offending him over and over again, after innumerable benefits received from his hand, eſpecially after having been delivered by God's pure mercy not only once or twice but many times from ſin and eternal death.

*Ingratitude.*

Reflect ſeriouſly upon this ingratitude, *Theotime*, and judge what it is for a ſlave to be ungrateful to his Lord, his Redeemer, to him to whom he owes all he has, in ſhort to God himſelf. If the council of *Trent* thus heightens the enormity of the firſt ſin committed after baptiſm upon this account, that it offends God after we have been *once* delivered from the captivity of ſin and the Devil. What muſt be ſaid of thoſe, who fall back into ſin after they

* 2 Pet. ii. 20. † 2 Pet. ii. 20, 21, 22.

they have been delivered from it not once but many times by the sacrament of penance? Was there ever an ingratiude equal to this? *Is this the return thou makeſt to the Lord, O fooliſh and ſenſeleſs people*?* O Chriſtians, is it thus that you treat your God? Muſt you not have loſt all ſenſe and underſtanding, thus to forget the infinite favours of your Creator, and after you have been admitted into his grace and favour, to continue offending your maker?

*Perfidiouſneſs.*

Remember that God never admitted you to a reconciliation but upon condition of a forrowful ſenſe, which you proteſted you had for having offended him, and upon promiſe, which you made to be faithful to him, and not to offend him any more. Hence you are not only ungrateful in offending anew, after he had pardoned you; but alſo a perfidious wretch. Perfidious, becauſe you acted contrary to your word, and contrary to the ſolemn promiſe made to God of ſerving him for the future. A promiſe which you ſolemnly made not to man, but to God himſelf before his church and in the preſence of his Angels. You would bluſh for ſhame, if you ſhould break your word to man, and yet you make a cuſtom of doing ſo to God, to whom nothing is more diſpleaſing than a promiſe ſlightly made, and ill complied with. *An unfaithful and fooliſh promiſe diſpleaſeth God*†.

Moreover, you are not only perfidious, but your perfidiouſneſs is a certain treaſon which you commit againſt God; becauſe you deſert him to yield yourſelf to his enemy the Devil, and ſerve him anew againſt God himſelf. This made *Tertullian* ſay‡, that "the ſinner, who, after he has renounced the Devil by repentance "and returns again to ſin, gives occaſion to the enemy to rejoice "upon his return, and triumph againſt God, ſaying, I have re-"gained the prey which I had loſt. Such conduct is manifeſtly "to prefer the Devil before God himſelf, when it being in his "choice whether he will be for the one or for the other, he ſo "eaſily deſerts the ſervice of God, to deliver himſelf up to that "of his enemy. By relapſing into ſin, he who before had a de-"ſign of appeaſing God by his converſion, as if he repented him-"ſelf of that good action, becomes willing to make a kind of "atonement to the Devil by revoking his renouncement of him, "and repenting that he had done penance for his ſins: rendering "himſelf by this fatal change as hateful in the ſight of God, as he "will be welcome to his enemy the Devil."



* Duet. xxxii. 6. † Eccli. v. 3. ‡ Lib. de penit.

*Contempt.*

Weigh well, *Theotime*, these reflections of *Tertullian*. You will here discover the evil you commit against God, if you are so unhappy as to relapse into sin, which you had forsaken at your conversion. You will there find not only the ingratitude and perfidious treachery which one is guilty of in regard of God, when after penance he returns again to sin; but also the enormous contempt which one shews of his graces, and of God himself. For what greater affront can a person offer to God, than to esteem less his friendship than all those trifling things for the sake of which one so easily relapses into sin? Is not this to esteem and make greater account of those things, than of the grace of God? and to prefer the Devil who suggests them, before God who forbids them?

But that I may make you truly sensible of the greatness of this contempt; I ask whether there can be a greater affront offered to a person, than to neglect his friendship after being restored to it: daily to offend him after being reconciled; to be almost constantly at variance, in hopes of being restored to his favour when one pleases? Would not every one say, that he who deals thus with his friend, must take him for a stupid and senseless man, who had not the least sense of being thus repeatedly slighted? Never was there an affront or contempt equal to this. Yet we thus treat Almighty God as often as we relapse into sin after confession; a contempt which ought to make those who are guilty of it apprehend the just effects of God's vengeance.

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## CHAP IV.

*Those who relapse frequently into their sins expose their salvation to great danger.*

THE generality of Christians who live habituated to relapses into sin, are wont to say, that God is good and merciful, and to take occasion from this hope in his mercy never to amend their lives. Such a great mistake must here be cleared up, that you may see that nothing leads more directly to eternal damnation, than such a daring presumption on the mercy of God, in order to lead a wicked life.

First, it is in this that the height of the contempt offered to God consists, to take occasion from his goodness and mercy more heinously to offend him, and never to continue long in his favour, since it seems so easy to regain it. But

But in the next place, those who make use of this pretext, reason very ill, and deceive themselves: for though it be very true, that God is infinitely good, and his mercies have no bounds; where did they ever find, that God is good to those who despise him, and who presume so much on his goodness, as to slight his displeasure? Holy writ tells us, that God is good to those that are good; that he is good to those that hope in him, and seek after him; that he shews mercy to those who return to him. But it is not any where said, that he is good to those who contemn and slight him: on the contrary, he threatens them with dreadful punishments. *They that despise me, shall be despised**. It is said indeed, that God shews mercy to sinners who return to him by repentance; but it is no where said, that he has promised the grace of repentance to all sinners. We are assured, that God receives all those who being truly converted return to him; but where is it ever said, that he receives those who return to him only for a time, at some particular part of the year, and soon after return to their sins?

This is not found in any place of holy writ: But on the contrary, we there find dreadful menaces against those, who treat God with such perfidy, and so great contempt.

*The Israelites punished for their frequent relapses.*

The *Israelites*, the chosen people of God, were fallen into captivity and under the tyranny of the *Egyptians*, under which they had groaned for a long time, overwhelmed with labour and misery. God by a peculiar mercy withdraws them from it, working many great miracles in their favour, and among the rest, the death of the first-born of the *Egyptains*, the passage through the *Red Sea*, as upon dry land, so to free them from the persecution of their enemies, who pursued them with a powerful army. He conducted them all that way by a pillar of fire, which marched before them: he fed them with *Manna*, which he showered down from heaven every morning. This carnal and ungrateful people, in the midst of all these favours, revolt from God, repenting themselves that ever they had forsaken *Egypt* (where they had lived so long oppressed with so much misery) wishing every moment to return back thither, murmuring against God on every occasion, and distrusting his providence and almighty power. God is often incensed against them, and punishes them so severely, that many times his people taught by afflictions returned to the duty and obedience due to their God and their deliverer. But this



* 1 Kings ii. 30.

their repentance lasted not long; for upon the first opportunity they fell back to their wonted infidelity.

There was one, the height or chief of all the rest, which was the occasion of their utter ruin. When approaching to the land of promise they refused to enter there, giving more credit to the false reports raised by malecontents, than to the word of God, and the assurances he had so often given them of the delightfulness of that abode. This provoked God's wrath to that degree, that he swore that not any of all those, who had been incredulous to his word, should enter into the place of rest, he had prepared for them. *As I live: and the whole earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord. But yet all the men that have seen my majesty, and the signs that I have done in Egypt, and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now ten times, and have not obeyed my voice, shall not see the land for which I swore to their fathers, neither shall any one of them that hath detracted me behold it**.

This menace was not like the former, which he had denounced against that people: for it was accomplished to a tittle, and not one of them that murmured entered there. They all died in the desert, where they continued near forty years, and their children had the happiness to possess it in their place.

This terrible example, from which we learn how God dealt with the *Israelites* after their repeated rebellions, teaches us likewise how he behaves to those Christians, who following their footsteps relapse into their sins, after being pardoned and received into favour. For what he did to the *Jews*, is a figure and a lively representation of what Christians may expect.

*I would not*, says St. *Paul*, *have you ignorant, brethren, that our fathers*, the Israelites, *were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea: and all in Moses were baptized in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual food: and all drank the same spiritual drink: (and they drank of the spiritual rock that followed them: and the rock was Christ.) But* all did not receive equal benefit from these blessings, for *with the most of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the desert. Now these things* happened literally to them, but *were done in a figure of us, that we should not covet evil things, as they also coveted. Neither let us tempt Christ* with perfidious infidelity, *as some of them tempted. Now all these things happened to them in figure: and they are written for our correction. Wherefore*, concludes this divine Apostle, *let him that thinketh*

* Numb. xiv. 21, 22, 23.

*thinketh himself to stand, take heed lest he fall**. Which is as much as to say, let every one take care to preserve himself in the grace of God, when once he has had the blessing to receive it.

All this is more than enough to demonstrate the truth we have advanced, of the extreme danger to which salvation is exposed by frequent relapses into mortal sin. But behold yet a more express text of the same Apostle St. *Paul* in his epistle to the *Hebrews*, who speaking to those who fall back into sin after they have been once reconciled to God, describes what they may expect, under the figure of an ungrateful soil, which, though carefully cultivated, however brings forth no fruit. *The earth*, says he, *that drinketh in the rain which cometh often upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is tilled, receiveth blessing from God. But that which bringeth forth thorns and briars, is rejected, and very near to a curse, whose end is to be burnt*†.

These words need no explication, *Theotime*, but only reflection; putting instead of the words *ungrateful soil*, those of *a soul ungrateful and perfidious to her God*, who by returning to her usual sins, continually abuses the graces she receives in the sacraments, without bringing forth any of the fruits of true repentance. You will find that this is what she ought to fear from the hand of God, and what you yourself, if you be such, ought to stand in dread of, *viz.* lest you be rejected by God, be cursed by him, and abandoned to eternal fire.

These three miseries, the greatest that can be apprehended make up an eternal damnation. They are the very same expressed in the sentence which God shall pronounce against the damned: *Depart, you cursed into everlasting fire*‡. See what we have said upon this subject in Part II. Chap. XI. and Art. III.

## CHAP. V.

### *Habitual relapses into sin give just ground to suspect the validity of preceding confessions.*

IT is very difficult for those, who live in habitual relapses, to be truly penitent when they come to confession, without which they make their confessions null, and receive no absolution of their sins. First, generally speaking, they, whose

*They who relapse, often make invalid confessions.*



* 1 Cor. x. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 11, 12. † Heb. vi. 7. 8. ‡ Matt. xxv. 41.

relapsing is grown into a habit, only confess through custom or occasion of some great solemnity, or for some other reason of decency and apparent piety. They seldom or never do it with a true spirit of repentance, and a real desire of amendment and overcoming their vitious habits. Secondly, it is scarce possible that those who relapse ordinarily into the same sins after their confessions, should have true contrition when they make their confessions. For true contrition implies a sorrow for sins past, as well as a serious purpose of amendment. Now who can believe, that they detest those sins from the bottom of their hearts, which they resume again so easily and so soon? How can it be thought that they have a firm resolution of doing what they scarce ever set about in good earnest? How can it be, that in all their confessions they should have a firm resolution of renouncing the sin, which yet they have never forsaken? Never leaving it at all, can it be believed that they have always a sincere resolution of forsaking it? This is what cannot be conceived, and which never happens in temporal concerns, where a firm resolution is in a manner always followed by performance.

Assuredly there is not any more infallible sign of false repentance. "For if you are penitent, you ought to repent yourself of "your sin; if you be sorry for it, do not commit it; if yet you "commit it, you are not penitent at all*." "He who is ashamed "of the evil he has done, will take great care to avoid what may "make him blush anew†." Some are wont to answer, that this relapse into sin does not proceed from any want of resolution and repentance, but from human frailty, which inclines to evil. This excuse is as false and ill grounded, as it is common among those who flatter themselves in their sins which they are not willing to forsake.

*Habitual relapses must be ascribed to malice and not to frailty.*

For first, can it be said, that this is an effect of frailty, when one wilfully returns to sin, knowing full well the evil he does, and when he is furnished with all the means necessary to preserve himself from it? Is not this what we call the sin of malice, and not of frailty? as we have shewn above in Part III. Chap. XIV. And yet this is the case of the greatest part of those who make a custom of relapsing into their sins after confession.

Secondly, can it be called an effect of frailty, when one returns to

* St. Augustine. † St. Ambrose.

to ſin becauſe he will not take due meaſures for the overcoming of his habits, by carefully avoiding the occaſions of ſin, taking proper advice and uſing every neceſſary means to that effect. Is not this deceiving one's ſelf, to attribute his frequent relapſes to human frailty, when they are entirely owing to one's own will, and to the neglect of thoſe things which would preſerve us from ſin?

Thirdly, if this frailty were not aſſiſted by divine grace, the excuſe might perhaps be admitted: but being ſtrongly fortified by the helps which God beſtows upon us in our neceſſities, we cannot lay the fault of our relapſes into ſin upon our own frailty, without accuſing ourſelves, either of not begging the grace of God in our prayers, or of not being faithful in co-operating with his grace.

Wherefore, to ſpeak the truth, we ought not here to accuſe human frailty, but the weakneſs of our repentance and contrition, the faint regret or ſorrow for ſins paſt, and the weak and very imperfect reſolution we have of avoiding them for the time to come. I do not ſay, that a relapſe into ſin is always the effect of a falſe repentance; for it may and does happen, that we relapſe into ſins for which we were truly penitent. But I ſpeak of a frequent and habitual relapſe; and I affirm, that morally ſpeaking it is impoſſible that thoſe who live in this manner ſhould not very frequently make invalid confeſſions for want of contrition; and that they often believe themſelves to be, when they are not, truly penitent, for the reaſons above-mentioned; which evinces the truth of that excellent ſaying of St. *Clement* of *Alexandria*: "Frequently to crave pardon for faults which one frequently "commits, is not to be a penitent, but only to a have a ſhadow "and appearance of repentance*." Ponder well upon theſe words.

## CHAP. VI.

*An excellent admonition of St.* Gregory *concerning the falſe repentance of habitual ſinners.*

I CANNOT here omit that important admonition of St. *Gregory* the Great, confirming all we have advanced in regard of thoſe who frequent the ſacrament of penance, without correcting their vitious habits. It is in his *Paſtoral*†, where he ſays, that they ought to take heed leſt their repentance be very often falſe, and only



* Lib. 2. ſtromatum. † P. 3. C. 31.

only in outward ſhew. " Thoſe ſinners who bewail their paſt " crimes, yet never forſake them, muſt be made to reflect that " as too many ſuch like entertain indeed thoughts of repentance, " but never go farther, ſo on the contrary the virtuous are indeed " tempted to ſin, but without yielding to the temptation. Now as " the temptations, to which the juſt do not at all conſent, ſerve " only to confirm them the more in virtue; ſo theſe imperfect " inclinations to virtue ſerve to detain ſinners in their evil ways, " and to give them a preſumptuous confidence of their ſalvation " in the midſt of their ſins, which they commit without remorſe: " this very preſumption is a puniſhment of their reiterated and " repeated ſins. Conſider the two oppoſite examples of *Balaam* " and St. *Paul*. *Balaam* ſeeing, from the top of a mountain, the " people of God encamped in the deſert, conceived ſome pious " and ſtrong deſires of his converſion, languiſhing away in wiſhes " to die the death of the juſt, and to reſemble that holy people " in his death. But immediately after he gave pernicious counſel " to deſtroy thoſe very people whom he had ſo much wiſhed to " reſemble in his death. St. *Paul*, on the contrary, feels within " himſelf ſolicitations to ſin, and thoſe temptations confirm him " more in virtue.

" Whence comes this? *Balaam* is touched with motions of re- " pentance, and is not juſtified: St. *Paul* is incited to ſin, and " the temptation does not defile his ſoul: but to convince us, " that good works begun and not perfected, do not at all conduce " to the ſalvation of the wicked, no more than the firſt motions " to evil, render good and virtuous ſouls guilty in the ſight of " God."

This obſervation deſerves to be well conſidered, the more becauſe it points out a very particular reaſon of that falſe repentance which is cuſtomary with thoſe who do not amend their lives; which is, that they have only a beginning of repentance conceived upon ſome good motions they feel in their heart, without proceeding farther. They conceive indeed ſome diſpleaſure againſt their ſins, but not a perfect hatred and deteſtation of them; they feel ſome faint deſires, but they have not an entire and ſincere reſolution of forſaking them.

*Important obſervation.*

There is yet one thing more very remarkable in this admonition drawn from the example of *Balaam* and his falſe repentance. This wicked prophet, in the thoughts he had of repentance,

repentance, desired indeed to die the death of the just, but he says not one word of living as they did: he begs the grace of resembling them in his death, but not of imitating them in his life. *Let my soul*, says he, *die the death of the just, and my last end be like to them* *. Thus his repentance was false, because he did not desire to forsake his sins, and amend his life; but only to be saved at the hour of death: Which is in other words to desire to live ill, and yet not be punished for it. This kind of repentance is found but too often among Christians, particularly among those who live in this customary relapse of which we are speaking. For there is not one of them who desires not to die in the grace of God, and save their souls: And for this reason they go to confession now and then to discharge themselves of their past sins, that they may not be troubled with remorse of conscience at the hour of death; but they seldom or never desire to live holily, or at least they have not a firm and efficacious will to do it, as by their frequent relapses too evidently appear.

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## CHAP. VII.

*By habitual relapses we lose great part of the benefit of our preceding good confessions.*

HAbitual relapses into sin do not only render many confessions invalid and null, but also make us lose the advantage of those good confessions we have made.

*The friendship of God, though not the remission of sin is lost by a relapse.*

Two benefits result from the sacrament of penance. The first is, the remission of sins; the second, the recovery of the friendship of Almighty God, and many other graces and helps, which he grants by virtue of the sacrament to those who worthily repent. Though these two effects be produced at the same time, and inseparably the one from the other; yet one may be lost without the other. For by relapse into mortal sin one does not lose the remission which he had received of former sins by good confessions; it being a certain truth, that a sin once pardoned never revives again: as the Apostle assures, *The gifts of God are without repentance* †. But as to the friendship of God, and the special assistances of his grace, which one merits by means of the sacrament, it is certain they are entirely lost by a relapse into mortal sin. God

* Numb. xxiii. 10. † Rom. xi. 29.

God himself threatens this by his Prophet. *If the just man*, says he, *shall turn away from his justice, and shall commit iniquity: his justices which he hath done shall not be remembered* *. The wise man says upon this subject, *He that washeth himself after touching the dead, if he toucheth him again, what doth his washing avail* †?

For this reason God says to sinners, *Wash yourselves, be clean* ‡: he does not only order that they wash themselves from their iniquities, but that they be also cleansed; forasmuch as according to the observation of St. *Gregory*, "It is to no purpose to be washed, if "one do not preserve himself clean. Without this one does no "more than those unclean animals, which wash themselves, and "presently wallow again in the mire. Hence, those (says St. *Gregory* "above-cited) who do penance, and do not amend their lives, are "to be put in mind, that it is to no purpose to cleanse themselves "from their sins by tears, if afterwards by their evil actions they "defile their souls: they seem only to cleanse themselves, to the "end that after they are washed they may return to their former filth."

## CHAP. VIII.

*The last state of a relapsing sinner is worse than the first.*

THIS truth our Saviour himself has taught us upon occasion of a possessed person, whom he had delivered from that miserable condition. It happens, that the wicked spirit being cast out of a man, uses all his endeavours to return to his former dwelling, and calling others to his assistance, at last he re-enters there, and this second possession is much more prejudicial than the former. *And the last state of that man is made worse than the first* §. By this example of a person whose body is possessed, we are instructed in what passes in the soul, when one unfortunately relapses into sin; as the Apostle St. *Peter* has explained it in these words: *If, flying from the pollutions of the world, they be again intangled in them, and overcome; their latter state is become unto them worse than the former* ¶.

Now if this be true of the first relapse, what will it be of the second, of the tenth, of the twentieth, and of all those which befal them, who do nothing else all their life-time but repent, and then

* Ezech. iii. 20. † Eccli. xxxiv. 30. ‡ Isai. i. 16. § Mat. xii. 45. ¶ 2 Pet. ii 20.

then as often return to the ſins they had repented of? It is evident, that they fall at laſt into a moſt deplorable ſtate, even almoſt into an impoſſibility of ſaving their ſouls. 1. Ill habits encreaſe, and grow ſtronger and ſtronger. 2. The light and graces of God diminiſh very conſiderably. 3. The Devil comes with more ſtrength and power to deſtroy him, whom he ſees ſo deeply engaged in wickedneſs. Behold three things, which endanger ſalvation in an high degree.

*Three effects of a relapſe expoſe ſalvation to the utmoſt danger.*

For firſt, as to vitious habits, it cannot be doubted, but that they are ſo fortified by a frequent repetition of their proper acts, that they become at length inſurmountable. The reaſon is clear, and experience daily verifies it. See Vol. I. Part I. Chap. X.

As to the graces of God, there is not any thing more apt to diminiſh them than habitual relapſes, accompanied with ingratitude, perfidious infidelity and contempt. But what moſt of all impairs them is the abuſe of the ſacraments, which one is guilty of during theſe frequent relapſes. For either the confeſſions which they make, and the communions they frequent are good or bad: if bad, then they are ſo many ſacrileges, which provoke God's wrath againſt us. If good, the ſinner by his relapſe loſes all the advantage, and draws upon himſelf a diminution of God's graces, by the abuſe of thoſe which he received in the ſacraments. This our Bleſſed Saviour has declared, when he ſays, *He that hath, to him ſhall be given, and he ſhall abound: but he that hath not, from him ſhall be taken away even that which he hath* *. That is, he encreaſes his grace in thoſe who make a good uſe of it, but withdraws it from ſuch as abuſe it; of which none are more guilty, than thoſe who fall back into thoſe very ſins from which they have been abſolved.

Now if divine graces be loſt and diminiſhed by theſe repeated relapſes, the third effect, which is the new addition of the power of our ghoſtly enemy, muſt follow of neceſſity. For as God is no ſooner departed from the ſoul, than the Devil preſently takes poſſeſſion of it; ſo alſo, according to the meaſure of his removal, the Devil becomes more powerful to effect our ruin. This is a neceſſary and infallible conſequence; and this is the reaſon why God pronounced this dreadful ſentence: *Wo to them, when I ſhall depart from them* †. And the greateſt of theſe misfortunes is, that the Devil becomes maſter of the ſoul, and reduces her to ſuch a ſlavery,

* Mat. xiii. 12. † Oſee ix. 12.

ſlavery, as to oblige her to do his will, as St. *Paul* has it, *by whom they are held captive at his will.* *.

## CHAP. IX.

*Frequent relapſes into ſin lead to final impenitence.*

IF an habitual relapſe into ſin, be the cauſe of many ſacrilegious confeſſions, and make us loſe all the fruit of thoſe we had made well; and if in the way of ſalvation it make a man always fall from bad to worſe: it evidently follows, that it generally leads to impenitence.

*Reaſons why a relapſe leads to impenitence.*

Firſt, thoſe who live in theſe cuſtomary relapſes intermingled with confeſſions, believe themſelves to be in a good way, whereas in reality they are far from it. They rely much upon the confeſſions they make from time to time, and never conſider how criminal their relapſes make them in the ſight of God. "Hence beginning ſome good works, "which they never perfect; they live in a proud preſumption, "that they ſhall be ſaved in the midſt of the evils which they "commit as far as they are able†." Thus not at all miſtruſting their wicked ſtate, they die without repentance of their ſins.

Secondly, being often ſubject to make ſacrilegious confeſſions from a want of true ſorrow, they are in great danger leſt the laſt they make be like the former, when they ſhould imagine themſelves to have true contrition, which is only ſuch in appearance as it was in their precedent confeſſions. This may eaſily happen, eſpecially if at that laſt time they confeſs their ſins to their ordinary director, who has indulged them in their repeated relapſes, and cheriſhed them in their continued impenitence.

Thirdly, thoſe who make a cuſtom of relapſing and of frequenting the ſacraments, at length become inſenſible to all things which might move them, and hardened againſt all the motives which can be offered to them, of fear, of hope, of the love of God. They are accuſtomed to hear all theſe things in their confeſſions, and at other times, whence they are deaf to all ſuch motives when propoſed to them on the moſt urgent occaſions: becauſe whatever is familiar to us, makes no impreſſion. Thus in time of ſickneſs they are expoſed to the danger of making as ſacrilegious con-

* 2 Tim. ii. 26. † St. Greg. de cura Paſtor. c. 31.

confeſſions as they did when in health; which is the more likely to happen as they generally put off every concern of this nature to the very laſt, when their diſtreſsful ſituation will not allow them to perform well ſo difficult a work. The repentance of dying perſons, as St. *Ambroſe* remarks, is often infirm and languiſhing.

Fourthly, thoſe who live in this manner have great grounds to fear, that God will forſake them at that laſt hour, in puniſhment of their repeated infidelities, of the abuſe of his ſacraments, and divine graces which they have therein received in vain; and alſo in chaſtiſement of a ſecret preſumption which they have entertained of being able to forſake their ſins whenever they ſhould pleaſe. A preſumption however common, yet highly offenſive in the ſight of God; the more ſo, as being the cauſe of all their relapſes after confeſſion: Becauſe they believe they ſhall always riſe again, as hitherto they have done; but they find themſelves frequently deceived. God by a juſt judgment puniſhes them at the hour of their death, by leaving them then to themſelves in their greateſt need, who before had continually abuſed his graces, and yet were ſo raſh and confident as to think themſelves ſecure, and from thence took occaſion to remain in their ſins.

The hiſtory of *Sampſon* is very inſtructive on this ſubject. God had endowed him with an extraordinary and miraculous ſtrength of body; he employed it many times againſt the *Philiſtines* his enemies, whom he had often overthrown or put to flight; and particularly upon ſome occaſions, wherein his wife, who was of that nation, confident of having diſcovered the ſecret of his ſtrength, had attempted to betray him into their hands. He had diſcomfited them with much eaſe; and preſuming upon future ſucceſs, he told her that the ſecret of his ſtrength lay in his hair, not believing perhaps that what he ſaid was true. She called in his enemies, and after ſhe had cut off his hair, whilſt he was aſleep, ſhe delivered him into their hands. He awakes with the noiſe, and the ſcripture remarks, that awakening he ſaid, *I will go out as I did before, and ſhake myſelf:* but he was deceived in his hopes; *not knowing that the Lord was departed from him.* In conſequence whereof, he falls into the hands of his enemies, who pull out his eyes and ſend him into their country, where he becomes their paſtime and the object of their ſcorn.

Behold a figure and lively repreſentation of what befals Chriſtian ſouls, who abuſe the graces of God, and return to their ſins, upon preſumption

presumption of a future repentance; for God many times gives them over to an obdurate heart, and to final impenitence, either by refusing them time to repent, or by depriving them of the means and grace to perform it well. "Although he has promised pardon to penitent sinners, he has promised repentance to no man*."

## CHAP. X.

### *What directors should do to prevent the habitual relapses of their penitents.*

AS in corporal sickness relapses may spring from the physician's fault, either because he has not sufficient skill to know the remedies proper for such and such distempers, or prudence enough to apply them in due season, or sufficient resolution, to make them be put in execution by the patient, notwithstanding his resistance, or impatience: so when penitents easily relapse into their sins, one may often say with truth, that it proceeds from the confessor's fault, who is deficient in one of these three things, either not having sufficient knowledge of the nature of the disorder, the remedies it requires, or wanting prudence to apply them right, or at least (which is commonly the case) resolution to oblige penitents thereto when they appear, as but too often they do, unwilling: this resolution is an effect of the charity they ought to have towards their penitents, whose salvation they should rather seek after, than yield to their inclinations although contrary to their good. Were confessors sufficiently endowed with these three qualifications, and used them with discretion, as they are obliged to do, they would prevent a vast number of relapses, and put their penitents into the way of a truly Christian life.

*Knowledge, prudence, and resolution necessary in a director.*

For first, their skill giving them a perfect insight into the obligation which Christians are under of living in the grace of God, and of the danger to which by these relapses their salvation is exposed, they would make a more strict inquiry into the most proper means to cure their penitents of their vices.

Secondly, their prudence would make them solicitous to know the present state of the penitent; in which they ought to observe two

* St. Augustine.

two things. 1. Whether he be duly disposed to receive absolution; and, secondly, Whether there be any hopes of his amendment. Thirdly, by their resolution they should oblige the penitent to perform what they shall judge necessary for receiving the sacrament worthily, and reaping some spiritual advantage.

The confessor then, as a good spiritual physician, ought to be possessed of these three qualifications, and to employ them for the good of his penitent, and the better discharge of his own duty. This good of the penitent consists in two things. First, in being restored to health, that is, to the grace of God: Secondly, in not relapsing into his former sickness, which is mortal sin. "For "there are two parts in physic, the one to cure the disease, the "other to preserve the health *."

The confessor is obliged to procure both these advantages for the penitent, and to employ for that end knowledge, prudence, and a charitable steadiness. He must not content himself with having restored his penitent to health, but he must labour also to preserve it, if he design to comply with the duty of a worthy minister of *Jesus Christ*, and a faithful co-operator with the grace of God, "who "does not satisfy himself with remitting our "sins by justification, but moreover grants "such a supply of his grace as is necessary to preserve us in that "happy state †." To procure him the first advantage, the director must examine strictly whether the penitent be capable of absolution, and to this end it is necessary to examine into two different things. The one, whether he have any of the impediments above-mentioned in Part IV. Chap. X. and the other, whether he has a custom of relapsing into his mortal sins after confession. For in this case there is little reason to believe the penitent, when he says that he is truly sorry for having offended God, and promises to amend. He often indeed makes such protestations, which do not come from his heart, or at least without any serious thoughts of amendment. He believes he has contrition, but has it not. This happens but too frequently, and then the confessor cannot give absolution, without putting himself in danger of committing a sacrilege. He ought to defer it, and give time to his penitent, to think as he ought of his amendment, and dispose himself for absolution.

*To secure the sacrament, and restore the penitent to the grace of God the first duty of a director.*

Such

* St. Augustin. in ps. viii. † St. Aug. ib.

Such proceedings ſurpriſe penitents, when they find confeſſors treat them as they are obliged to do, but theſe are penitents in name only, and not in reality, who believe that confeſſion conſiſts only in a declaration of their ſins, and that when once they have declared them, they have a right to receive abſolution, and to oblige the confeſſor to it. They expect to be believed upon their bare word, when they ſay they are truly ſorry for their ſins, and that they will not commit them any more for the future; although in their former confeſſions they have always ſaid the ſame, and without effect.

We have ſhown above how much ſuch penitents deceive themſelves: For they will judge their judges, and teach their phyſicians. It belongs to the confeſſor to judge of the ſtate of the penitent, and ſee whether he be ſufficiently diſpoſed to receive abſolution, and whether or no he can give it with ſafety. This is his duty, as being obliged to give an account of his conduct to God. It is the blood of the Son of God, which he applies in the ſacrament; and God will require an exact and rigorous account of him, if he proſtitute it to the unworthy. Judge then *Theotime*, whether that penitent be not very unreaſonable, who would oblige his confeſſor to give him abſolution, when the confeſſor either does not find him duly diſpoſed, or has good grounds for ſuſpicion. Is not this to ſeek his own and his confeſſor's damnation?

*To abſolve thoſe whoſe ſincerity is juſtly ſuſpected a damnable practice.*

If the penitent be here blameable, the confeſſor is much more to be condemned for ſo eaſily yielding to the importunities of his penitent, as to give him a doubtful abſolution, which may be rather hurtful than profitable to him. He ought to remember, that there are cruel mercies, hurtful both to thoſe to whom they are ſhewn, and to thoſe who ſhew them; and that a good phyſician does not deſiſt from applying remedies, when he judges them neceſſary, notwithſtanding the oppoſition his patient makes. He lets him complain, being aſſured that what he does is neceſſary for the patient, who, when he ſhall have recovered his health, will not only be well contented to have ſuffered, but alſo acknowledge the kindneſs his phyſician did him. "He is not always a friend, who ſpares us, nor "he always an enemy, who chaſtiſes. The phyſician, who com- "mands a lunatic to be bound, and awakes a perſon in a lethargy, "is troubleſome to them both, but it is becauſe he loves them, "and by tormenting them he cures them. The one and the other, "as long as they are ſick, are angry with him; but as ſoon as "they

" they are cured, they hold themſelves much obliged to him, " for not ſparing them *."

Every director ſhould endeavour to blend his ſteadineſs with mildneſs, inducing the penitent to approve of his conduct, by teſtifying a great regard for him, and convincing him that he is bound to take theſe meaſures, as well for the diſcharge of his duty as for the ſalvation of his penitent. This is the oil of the goſpel †, which he muſt employ with the wine, when he dreſſes the wounds of others conſciences, endeavouring by charity to ſweeten the ſharpeſt remedies he is obliged to uſe. Behold here the firſt good which the confeſſor ought to have in view, *viz.* to ſecure the ſacrament, and to reſtore the penitent to the grace of God.

*To procure the amendment of the penitent, the ſecond duty of a director.*

There is a ſecond, which he is obliged alſo as far as he is able, to procure, *viz.* the amendment of the penitent. That cure avails nothing, which is followed by a relapſe, and the phyſician who is not concerned to prevent it, complies but with half his duty; and becomes himſelf guilty of the diſtemper into which the ſick man relapſes, and even of death itſelf, if it befal him. This is the reaſon why the confeſſor is obliged not only to advertiſe the penitent not to return to his ſins, but alſo to ſhew him the means how to avoid them, and to engage him to put them in execution.

Theſe means are penance, prayer, ſatisfactory works, as faſting, alms-deeds, mortification, to which may be added certain conditional penances, that is, ſome painful things to be performed, or ſuffered by the penitent in caſe he return again to his ſins, and as often as he ſhall relapſe; as to faſt, to give alms, or ſome other painful work for each fall. The apprehenſions of theſe ſorts of puniſhments ſerve frequently as a bridle to withhold penitents whilſt tempted to offend God. Laſtly, the deferring of abſolution, when the penitent does not correct himſelf, is frequently a very good remedy to make him amend his life. This makes the penitent think ſeriouſly of amendment, and labour to reform his vices, which make him unworthy of ſo great a benefit, and punctually to comply with what the confeſſor ſhall enjoin him, to the end that he may be worthy. This remedy ought to be applied with much prudence. The confeſſor ought to make a vaſt diſtinction between penitents, who relapſe into their ſins through frailty, and thoſe who



* St. Aug. ep. ad Vincent. † Luke x.

return through malice, that is to say, either on set purpose, or through an affected negligence.

He will know the former, by their being extremely troubled to see themselves subject to those relapses, by their using all endeavours to abstain from sin, and practising the means their confessor appoints them. Towards these he must use far more mildness, support their weakness, absolve them more easily, provided they continue to labour on their part to amend their lives.

The latter are those, who not only continue in their wickedness, but do either nothing at all, or very little to refrain from their sins. Towards these more severity must be used, as they always promise amendment without almost ever effecting it, it is often not only profitable, but necessary to defer their absolution, until such time as they have given sufficient proofs of their conversion by abstaining from their sins, and faithfully performing what is appointed for that end.

## CHAP. IX.

*Of the means which the penitent ought to observe in order to avoid relapses into sin.*

*The Penitent must do four things to prevent relapses.*

THE first is, that he understand perfectly the greatness of the evil, and the imminent danger to which he exposes his salvation; for the sick man who has no apprehension of the ill consequences of his disease will never be cured: therefore he must be fully convinced of two things. First, that to fall into mortal sin is of all misfortunes the greatest. Secondly, that a relapse into sin exposes his eternal salvation to an extreme hazard by finding himself surprised, when he least thinks of it.

The next thing he ought to do in consequence of this knowledge, is to avoid all those things which have been the causes of this misfortune, or occasion a relapse. This is an indispensible obligation, and the first mark of a penitent soul desirous of recovering her former health. We laugh at a sick man that will not abstain from such meats or actions, as are apprehended prejudicial to him: we say, that he loves his pleasure more than health, and that he is his own murderer. The like is to be said of a penitent, when he acts thus. *How long will fools covet those things which are hurtful to themselves**.

The

* Prov. i. 22.

The third is, the choice of a good phyſician: that, is he muſt always addreſs himſelf to the beſt confeſſors, and whom he believes endowed with the three above-mentioned qualifications, eſpecially to thoſe who do not neglect the recovery of their penitents, but apply themſelves ſeriouſly to that effect. The penitent who deſires his health, muſt ſeek out ſuch phyſicians: if not, it is an infallible proof that he does not deſire to amend. He is afraid leſt the confeſſor ſhould make him ſenſible of his miſery, and put a ſtop to the diſorders of his conſcience: a certain ſign that he is not willing to be cured. "He that loves truth, that is, his ſalvation, is not "afraid of a monitor, or of having his defects laid open before his "eyes *."

The fourth is, faithfully to apply the remedies which are neceſſary to cure the ſoul and preſerve it from ſin. No one doubts but that this is abſolutely neceſſary; yet few practiſe it ſo readily as they believe it. Many penitents wiſh to amend their lives, but would do it at their eaſe without pain or trouble. The ſight of the remedies is a trouble to them; and when they ſhould put them in execution, their heart fails them, and they will do nothing at all. Is not this to aim at impoſſibilities, to ſeek the end without the means to obtain it? The cure without the remedies, and ſalvation without trouble? This is to act like *the ſluggard*, who *willeth, and willeth not* †. 4. This is a faint and imperfect wiſh to be delivered from their evils, but in reality it is an effectual deſire to continue in them, and never to be cured.

You will act otherwiſe, *Theotime*, if you are truly penitent, and deſirous of your ſalvation, by carefully ſeeking after and applying the neceſſary remedies againſt ſin.

*General remedies againſt a relapſe.*

The firſt is, to preſerve with care in your ſoul the ſpirit of penance, of which you were made partaker in confeſſion, *viz.* an hatred of ſin, a ſorrow for having committed it, and a reſolution to offend no more. Now to preſerve this ſpirit it is neceſſary to renew theſe acts every day, which may eaſily be done.

The ſecond is to perform with this ſpirit the works of penance, as well thoſe that are enjoined in the ſacrament, as others which you impoſe upon yourſelf. Theſe works conduce very much to deter us from our ſins.



* St. Aug. † Prov. xiii. 4.

The third remedy is prayer. As all our ſtrength is from God, it is but juſt we make our addreſſes to him, that he will vouchſafe powerfully to aſſiſt us with his grace. Without this it is impoſſible to cure the diſtempers of the ſoul. *Aſk*, ſays the Lord, *and it ſhall be given you* *, which is as much as to ſay, what you do not crave, you ſhall not receive. But as this means is neceſſary, ſo alſo it is moſt powerful, and never fails of its effect. *No one hath hoped in the Lord, and hath been confounded* †, or fruſtrated of his deſires. But this prayer muſt be frequent and fervent. As we have need every day of his holy grace, ſo *we ought always to pray* for it‡. And as we beſeech him to vouchſafe his mercies, that we may be ſaved; ſo it is but juſt that we implore them with great fervour, and an ardent deſire of obtaining what we aſk.

The fourth remedy is frequent confeſſion. This is alſo a neceſſary means, without which it is morally impoſſible to be freed from a vitious habit, when once engaged therein. It is a ſacrament which remits ſins paſt, and gives grace to avoid them for the future. There one renews his ſorrow for having offended God, and his reſolution thenceforward to be faithful to him; one there receives advice, and means to that effect; one is thereby brought back into the way of ſalvation, encouraged when he is remiſs, and fortified againſt all poſſible difficulties. They who neglect this means, will never be freed from their habitual ſins; but they who tender their ſalvation will readily approach to it.

The holy communion is alſo a very efficacious remedy againſt relapſes. It gives ſtrength againſt temptations, it weakens our ill habits, and makes us avoid many venial ſins, which lead and diſpoſe to mortal. This is to be underſtood, when the communion is performed with all neceſſary diſpoſitions. It produces all theſe effects proportionably to the greater or leſs devotion with which we approach that holy table.

The reading alſo of good books is a moſt powerful means to keep us in the ſtraight path of virtue. All theſe are general remedies, and common to all kinds of ſins. There are others more particular againſt each ſin conſidered in its kind, which you may conſult in the firſt volume.

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* Luke xi. 9. † Eccli. ii. 11. ‡ Luke xviii.

# INSTRUCTIONS

## CONCERNING THE

# HOLY COMMUNION.

## The PREFACE.

### Of the Neceſſity of this Inſtruction, and the Order to be obſerved therein.

*THIS inſtruction is no leſs neceſſary than that of penance, becauſe the holy communion completes and perfects what penance had begun, that is to ſay, it perfectly re-eſtabliſhes the ſoul in the grace of God. It preſerves, augments, and ſtrengthens that grace, and contributes very much towards final perſeverance, ſuppoſing it be frequently made uſe of, and that the receiver approach to it with thoſe diſpoſitions which ſo holy and ſo adorable a ſacrament requires. Whereas, on the contrary, it expoſes the unworthy receiver to the moſt dreadful of all evils, by changing the fountain of life into the cauſe of death, and that which of itſelf is a pledge of love and mercy, into a ſentence of condemnation or everlaſting death.*

*If one communicate, though not abſolutely unworthily, that is, in the ſtate of mortal ſin, yet with ſome irreverence, or conſiderable defect in devotion, he is deprived of the better part of that fruit, which otherwiſe he might receive from the ſacrament. He does not only loſe many favours, but contracts many infirmities, as coldneſs in charity, indevotion, inſenſibility as to the concerns of ſalvation, the diminution of our ſpiritual ſtrength and divine graces, frequent relapſes into venial and ſometimes into mortal ſin.*

*Thus you ſee,* Theotime, *of what importance it is to perform this great action well. No leſs than your ſalvation depends upon the right performance of it. Now to do this worthily, it is neceſſary that we be*

*well instructed. Whence it is easy to perceive how useful instruction upon this subject is, and how great the obligation of giving your most serious attention to it, that you may reap great spiritual advantage to your soul.*

*I shall divide this treatise into two parts; whereof the first treats of the doctrine, the second of the practice of holy communion. In the first, I shall declare what it imports us to know concerning this sublime mystery; in the second what we are to do to receive it worthily, and with profit.*

*In the first part I shall give some general expositions of faith, and the principal mysteries, for the benefit of those who are not already instructed in these important truths.*

*I hope those, who shall peruse them with care and a desire to learn, will find full and solid instructions in all the fundamental points of religion, and by such means become more capable of receiving the singular advantages of holy communion, and being replenished with these graces which God bestows upon us in this blessed sacrament.*

*The second part containing only directions for practice, it will be very proper to peruse it often, but particularly upon the eve and day of communion.*

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## PART I.

### *Of the truths we ought to know concerning the sacrament of the Eucharist.*

*Three things to be known.*

EVERY Christian that approaches this sacrament ought to be well instructed in three things, of which two are general, the third is peculiar to this sacrament.

First, he must be instructed in faith in general, without which it is impossible to attain to the knowledge of this great mystery of the eucharist. He must understand what this virtue is, which is the basis and ground-work of salvation, as St. *Paul* says, *Faith is the substance of the things to be hoped for**.

Secondly, he must be instructed concerning the principal mysteries of faith, as of the Blessed Trinity, the Incarnation, the Redemption, the Catholic Church. Except he believe these truths, it is impossible either to come to the knowledge or belief of that of the holy eucharist.

Thirdly, he must be thoroughly informed in what concerns this sacrament in particular, as the real presence of the Son of God in the

* Heb. xi. 1.

the consecrated host, the change of the substance of the bread and wine into that of his body and blood, the effects which this sacrament produces in the soul of the worthy receiver, and the dispositions with which it ought to be received.

## CHAP. I.

### *Of Faith.*

FOR greater ease, we shall treat of this subject by way of question and answer.

Q. *What are we obliged to know concerning faith in general?*

*A.* SEVEN things; *viz.* What faith is; who is the author of it; what its action; its object; its motive; its rule; and what the conditions requisite that it may be perfect.

Q. *What is faith?*

*A.* IT is a gift of God, or a light from above, by which man being illuminated does firmly believe all those things which God has revealed, and proposed to his church to be believed, whether written, or unwritten.

In this definition is comprised all we are obliged to know concerning faith. First it teaches us, that faith is a supernatural light, proceeding not from us, but from God, and which makes us assent to those truths, the belief whereof is necessary for salvation. It teaches also, who is the author of faith, what its action, and the rest, as we shall see by the following questions.

Q. *Who is the author of Faith?*

*A.* GOD alone. *Faith is the gift of God*, says St. *Paul**, there is none but he can give it. He bestows it upon us by enlightening our understanding with a supernatural light, and inclining the will to consent; hence, though the will concur in accepting the truth proposed, God alone is the first and principal cause thereof, wherefore it is very necessary that we beg it at his hands.



* Ephes. ii. 8.

Q. *What is the action, object, and motive of Faith?*

*A.* TO believe, that is, to hold a truth for certain and assured, without the least doubt, is the proper act of faith.

The object, that is, the things which we are obliged to believe, are all the truths which God has revealed, and which are proposed to our belief.

The motive, or reason why we ought to believe, is divine revelation. We believe a truth, because God, who neither can deceive, nor be deceived, has revealed it. Hence this revelation is always infallible.

Q. *By what ways does God reveal the truth to us?*

*A.* BY the holy scripture, and by tradition. These are the two ways, whereby God has been pleased to manifest his holy truths; and both of them are equally infallible, because both are equally the word of God, the one written, the other unwritten.

Q. *Which is the rule of Faith?*

*A.* WE call that the rule of faith, whereby we discern the revelations which come, from those that do not come from God, it being certain that there are some false revelations which the devil, the author of lies, proposes by his ministers. Therefore, that we may not be deceived, we stand in need of a certain rule.

This rule is the judgment or the interpretation of the holy church, to which God has given that power, and promised the assistance of his holy spirit, that she may never be deceived.

The proofs are manifest in the scripture; *Behold*, says Christ to his disciples, *I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world* *. He also said, *Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it* †. The Apostle says, that the church is *the house of God* and *the pillar and ground of the truth* ‡. The Son of God commands us to hearken to her even as to himself. *He that heareth you heareth me, and he that despiseth you despiseth me* §. *If he will not hear the church, let him be to thee as the heathen and the publican* ¶.

Without this rule we can have no faith, because without it we can neither be assured what is divine revelation, which are the true

* Mat. xxviii. 20. † Mat. xvi. 18. ‡ 1. Tim. iii. 15. § Luke x. 16. ¶ xviii. 17.

true ſcriptures, nor which is their true ſenſe; wherefore heretics, who refuſe to follow the judgment of the church, have neither faith, nor even any certainty of any thing they believe.

They ſay indeed they follow the ſcripture, but they deceive themſelves. For firſt, how do they know, there is ſuch a thing as ſcripture, but by the teſtimony of the Catholic church, which aſſures us of it, and has preſerved it from generation to generation, even to theſe days? Did not St. *Auguſtine* ſay *, and with good reaſon, "that "he would not believe the goſpel, except he were moved to it by "the authority of the Catholic church? and that if we believe "the church, when ſhe tells us we muſt believe the goſpel, why "ſhould we not believe her, when ſhe forbids us to believe Mani-"cheus, or heretics." Secondly, it is not enough to follow the ſcripture, except alſo they follow and be aſſured of the true ſenſe of ſcripture; for as St. *Auguſtine* ſays †, "Hereſy ſprings from "no other ſource, but from good ſcripture ill underſtood, and "boldly maintained." And St. *Hilary* ſays ‡, that there is no heretic but maintains his blaſphemies by the ſcripture.

*A capital miſtake of all heretics.*

If they ſay that the Holy Ghoſt inſpires them with the true ſenſe of the ſcripture, and the right underſtanding of its myſteries: Never was any heretic without this plea. Secondly, if it be ſo, why are there ſo many different ſentiments among them in points of faith? Can the Holy Ghoſt be contrary to, or contradict himſelf? Is it poſſible that he ſhould inſpire both truth and falſehood? Thirdly, who does not perceive that this anſwer authorzies as many religions as there are men? for every one will eaſily ſay that he has the divine ſpirit. Laſtly, why do they deſire that others ſhould believe them, whilſt they affirm that they have the Holy Spirit, ſince they themſelves refuſe to believe the church, which requires their aſſent by ſo juſt a title, as is the promiſe made her by the ſon of God of the continual aſſiſtance of his holy ſpirit, even to the end of the world?

*Another miſtake.*

We muſt then conclude, and hold as a certain truth, that it is neither our private judgment, nor our interior perſuaſion, however we may believe it comes from the Holy Ghoſt, which is capable of being a rule in points of Faith, or can make us ſee which is a true, and which a falſe revelation. It is the ſole teſtimony of the Catholic church

* Contra epiſt. fundam. c. 5. † Tract 18. in Jo. ‡ L. 2. ad Conſtant.—Auguſt.

church, and the judgment which she forms of the divine truths, which is and ought to be the rule of our belief. For whilst we submit ourselves to her judgment we cannot fail. As we cannot but mistake and err, when, though ever so little, we depart from the doctrine of the church.

*Conditions of the rule of faith.*

We find in the church the four conditions required for the rule of faith. To be a rule, it must at the same time be *one*, *certain*, *manifest* and *visible*.

The church is *one*; for as there can be but one faith, so there can be no more than one true church, as it is said in the *Nicene* creed, *one*, *holy*, *catholic*, *and apostolic church*.

The judgment of the church is *certain* in points of faith, since she can never fail, being, as the Apostle says, *the pillar and ground of the truth* *. The judgment of the church is *manifest*, because clearly proposed, and by word of mouth explained upon occasion of any emergent difficulty in matters of faith. The church was established by the Son of God to determine debated points: his will is that we have recourse to her on these occasions, according as it was also practised in the Old Testament, where it is said, *The lips of the priest shall keep knowledge, and they shall seek the law at his mouth* †. The Apostle assures us, that the same method is to be observed in the New Testament, when he says, that the Son of God *gave some Apostles, and other some pastors and doctors for the edifying of the body of Christ, the church: that henceforth we be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine* ‡. For this reason St. *Augustine* affirms, that in all difficulties which occur concerning matters of faith, we must apply to the church. "If any one fear to be deceived in the obscurity of this question, "let him consult the church §."

Lastly, the church is *visible*, as consisting of pastors, who have succeeded one another ever since the Apostles, to this present time; and as in all ages one might, so at this very time one may easily address himself to them to be instructed in whatever concerns our faith. This is the city, whereof the son of God speaks *seated on a mountain* ¶, to which all the world may have access, as was foretold by *Isaias*, *Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us his ways, and*

* 1 Tim. iii. 15. † Mal. ii. 7. ‡ Eph. iv. 11, 12. § St. Aug. l. contra Cresconium. ¶ Mat. ii. 3.

*and we will walk in his paths; for the law shall come forth from Sion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem* *. It was to this city that St. *Augustine* † sent the *Donatists*, when he said to them, "you "have the city, whereof he himself who built it, said, that it "was a city built upon a mountain, and could not be hidden."

I have purposely expatiated on the rule of faith; because it is a fundamental maxim in matters of faith, that we must hearken to and obey the church: we must receive divine revelations from her alone, from the interpretation she gives of the holy scripture and tradition; the two ways by which God has been pleased to convey his divine truths, mysteries of our holy faith to us. *Important remark.*

Q. *What qualities or conditions ought our faith to have?*

*A.* IT follows from what we have already said, that faith, to be perfect, must have three conditions; it must be *humble*, *universal*, and *firm*.

*Humble*, that is, in matters of faith we are to submit ourselves to the judgment of the church, and not to be wedded to our own sense, nor to our interior persuasion, nor to the judgment of any particular person. Thus God ordained in the Old Testament ‡, where he commanded, that in the difficulties which should occur concerning the performance of the law, every one should have recourse to the priests, and follow exactly their decision: and that under pain of death, in case any should be refractory or disobedient. And in the New Testament he has decreed, that "he who will not hear the "church, shall be accounted as an infidel §. *First quality.*

*Universal*, that is, it ought to comprehend, and believe in general all the truths which are proposed by the church to be believed, without excepting any. And the reason is evident; because the church, which proposes them, by reason of the assistance of the Holy Ghost, which is promised her without restriction, is equally infallible in all her judgments, and can be no more deceived in the least, than in the greatest mystery of our faith. St. *Augustine*, speaking of the books of the sacred scripture, says, "If I believe "the gospel, I must also necessarily believe the Acts of the "Apostles, because the same authority of the Catholic Church "obliges *Second quality.*

* Isai. ii. 3. † De unitat. Eccl. c. 14. ‡ Deut. xvii. 8. § Mat. xviii. 17.

" obliges to believe them both*." We may say the same of all the other truths, which are proposed by the church, for if we believe one, we ought also to believe the others; because it is the same authority, and the same church, which proposes, and gives us assurance of them both. The same St. *Augustine*, speaking of heretics, and those who would give credit to nothing but what they please, says, " By believing in the gospel, what coincides " with your fancy, and rejecting what does not so, you rather " give credit to yourselves than to the gospel; because, when led " by your private spirit, you approve what pleases, and disapprove " what displeases you in scripture; you do not submit yourselves " to the authority of holy writ, in order to find out your faith, " but rather you subject the scripture to yourselves, to judge of it " according to your will†."

*Third quality.* Lastly, faith ought to be *firm*, that is, free from any, at least *voluntary* doubt: And this also for the same reason, the infallible authority of the church, which proposes to us the divine truths the objects of our faith, and cannot be deceived in what she proposes to us. So that there is no more reason to doubt of any one truth, than of all the rest. There is not a better way to dispel readily the doubts which arise against any one article of our faith, than to reflect upon the others which one believes with all the certainty imaginable; which yet are not otherwise grounded than upon the same authority of the church: for if we do not doubt of those, neither ought we to question these. In all the doubts which may occur, concerning any point of faith, whether they arise from our own imaginations, or spring from heresy, from new doctrines, or scandal given in the church, we ought to have recourse to this authority as to a secure refuge; a refuge where we shall find the divine *protection from the contradiction* of evil *tongues*‡. " If you " find tongues which contradict you, heresies raised up against " you, and divisions which oppose you, have recourse to the " tabernacle of God; adhere and stick fast to the Catholic Church; " do not depart from this rule of Truth, and you shall be pro- " tected, and guarded from the contradiction of tongues in the " tabernacle of God§."

Behold not only a profitable but also a necessary advice, which ought to be practised upon occasion of any doubts in faith, and especially

* Contra Epist. fundam. † L. 16. cont. Faust. c. 3. ‡ Psalm xxx. 21. § St. Aug. in Psalm xxx. ser. 3.

especially in the beginning of any hereſy. Had the heretics of our time followed this good counſel, they would never ſo unfortunately have continued obſtinate in their error, or drawn others into the ſame ruin, as they have done.

## CHAP. II.

*Of the things we are obliged to believe.*

WE ſhall reduce them to four heads. 1. The divinity, or what we are obliged to believe of God. 2. The incarnation, or the humanity of the Son of God, which ſhall comprehend what we are to believe of *Jeſus Chriſt*. 3. The church. 4. The ſacraments. Theſe four things are all contained in the Apoſtles Creed.

### ARTICLE I.

*What we are obliged to believe of God?*

FIRST, that there is one only true God, who is an uncreated being, eternal, independent, infinite in knowledge, in power, in wiſdom, in goodneſs, in juſtice, and in all other perfections.

Secondly, That in God there are three perſons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghoſt. That all theſe three are but one true God, having the ſame divine eſſence, the ſame wiſdom, the ſame goodneſs, the ſame power, and ſo of the other divine perfections. That the Son proceeds from the underſtanding of the Father by a perfect knowledge which the Father conceives of himſelf, by which he expreſſes his own image in the Son. That the Holy Ghoſt proceeds from the Father and the Son, by the mutual love which they bear one another. That theſe proceſſions do not cauſe any inequality or dependence, or priority amongſt the divine perſons, who are all equal and eternal, as being all but one only true God, one in nature, and three in perſons.

Thirdly, That God is the author and creator of all things, that he made both heaven and earth, and all the creatures therein, whether viſible or inviſible, of nothing but by his only word: that he preſerves them by his power, and governs them by his wiſdom.

Fourthly, That he is the end of all things, particularly of men and Angels, whom he created to adore and ſerve him, and for whom

whom he has prepared eternal happineſs, which conſiſts in the perfect enjoyment of himſelf in heaven.

## ARTICLE II.

*What we are obliged to believe of* Jeſus Chriſt.

TO underſtand this article the better, let us divide it into queſtion and anſwer.

Q. *What is* Jeſus Chriſt?

*A.* HE is the Son of God, the ſecond perſon of the Bleſſed Trinity, who became incarnate, that is, was made man for our ſalvation.

Q. *Why was he made man?*

*A.* TO redeem us from the ſentence of everlaſting death, which we had all incurred by the diſobedience of our firſt parents, and to make full ſatisfaction to divine juſtice, as well for that firſt or original ſin, as for all the reſt which have been committed ever ſince by other men.

Q. *This incarnation in what does it conſiſt?*

*A.* IT conſiſts in the ſtrict and perſonal union of the eternal word with our human nature, that is, with a mortal body and an immortal ſoul, ſuch as we have; from which union there reſults a compound, whom we call *Jeſus Chriſt*, true God, and at the ſame time true man.

Whence it follows, that in *Jeſus Chriſt* there are two natures, and one only perſon, the divine and the human nature united in one and the ſame perſon of the Son of God, or the eternal word: whereas, in the divinity there is but one nature, and three perſons.

By this union the divinity was neither changed into the humanity, nor the humanity into the divinity of our Lord; for that is impoſſible. But both natures enjoying each of them its own perfections, were ſtrictly united in the perſon of the Son of God. "So that continuing what he was, that is, God, he became what "he was not, that is, man*."

Q. *How*

* St. Leo. Serm. de. nativ. Dom.

Q. *How was this divine union accompliſhed?*

*A.* WHEN the fulneſs of time was come, in which God had decreed to ſend his Son for the redemption of mankind, he ſent from heaven an Angel to the Bleſſed Virgin, in whom he had ordained that this adorable myſtery ſhould be performed, to declare to her that ſhe ſhould be the temporal mother of the Son of God.

She had no ſooner given her conſent to theſe happy tidings, but the almighty power frames in her virginal womb a human body out of her pureſt blood, creating in the ſame inſtant a rational ſoul to animate it, and in that ſame moment the eternal word, united in his perſon the divine and human nature. Thus was fulfilled that of St. *John: The word was made fleſh* *.

The Bleſſed Virgin having thus conceived the Son of God, by the operation of the power of the Holy Ghoſt, at the end of nine months ſhe brings him forth into the world, nouriſhes, maintains, and brings him up as other mothers do their children. The Son of God lived with her thus, unknown to the world, until about the age of thirty years; after which time he began to manifeſt himſelf, and to undertake the work of our redemption for which he came.

Q. *What is it that the Son of God has done for our Redemption?*

*A.* CHIEFLY four things: firſt, he preached publicly his goſpel during the ſpace of three years and ſome months, confirming the truth of his doctrine, his miſſion, and his divinity, by an infinite number of miracles.

Secondly, he ſuffered under *Pontius Pilate* a moſt bitter paſſion and death upon the croſs; upon which he offered himſelf a bleeding ſacrifice in ſatisfaction to divine juſtice for the ſins of all mankind, in compenſation for the infinite injury which ſin had done to the divine majeſty, and thereby to open the gates of everlaſting life to man. Having performed this duty, *the third day he roſe again from the death, and forty days after his reſurrection he aſcended*, glorious and triumphant, *into heaven: from thence*, at the end of the world, *he ſhall come to judge both the living and the dead*, according to their merits, who for that end ſhall be raiſed from death to life and appear before him, to receive either an eternal

* Joh. i. 14.

eternal reward for their good, or an everlasting punishment for their evil works.

Thirdly, he established his church purchased with his blood; that is, a congregation of the faithful, who should believe in him, and continue in an uninterrupted succession to the end of the world.

Fourthly, he instituted the sacraments as the means to convey to us the merits of his passion, and as so many precious vessels, wherein is preserved the price of that adorable blood which he has so abundantly shed for us, to the end it might be applied to us, according as our salvation should require.

## ARTICLE III.

*What we are obliged to believe concerning the Church.*

*The Church is the mystical body of Christ.*

WE must first believe that it is the mystical body of which *Jesus Christ* is the head, or a congregation of the faithful holding the same doctrine or faith which he taught, using the same sacraments which he instituted, living under the conduct of the Apostles and succeeding pastors, and acknowledging the same visible head, the Vicar of *Jesus Christ*, the chief bishop and true successor of St. *Peter*.

*It is One.*

Secondly, that there is but *one church*, as there is but *one Lord*, *one faith*, *one baptism*, as St. *Paul* says *. "He that does not preserve "this union, how can he believe that he has faith? He who "opposes and resists the church, who abandons the chair of St. "*Peter*, upon which the church is built, how can he hope that "he is in the church? since the blessed Apostle teaches this same "thing, and shews the sacred tie of unity, affirming, that there is "but one body (that is, the church) as there is but one spirit who "governs it†."

*It acknowledges the Pope for its visible head.*

Thirdly, that this only true church acknowledges the Pope for her visible head, whom *Jesus Christ* has appointed to govern her, and to be the source and centre of her unity here on earth. "Heresies and schisms spring from "hence, that some will not acknowledge in the church one whom "*Jesus Christ* constituted head over the rest, in those words which "he

* Ephes. iv. 5. † St. Cyprian. de unita Ecclesiæ.

" he ſpoke to St. *Peter*, *Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will* " *build my church: and I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of* " *heaven**; and in another place, *feed my ſheep* †. Upon one man " he builds his church, and gives him charge to feed his flock. " And although he beſtowed an equal authority upon the Apoſtles, " *as far as concerns the remiſſion of ſins:* yet that the unity of the " church might more clearly appear, he founded one chair; and " it was his will that the unity ſhould take its beginning from one " man.....The primacy was given to St. *Peter*, to ſhew that the " church of *Chriſt*, and the chair was one‡. St. *Peter* was pre- " ferred before the other Apoſtles to be the head of the church; " to the end that the head being once appointed, all occaſion of " diviſion in the church might be removed§."

Fourthly, we are obliged to believe that there is no ſalvation for any one out of this one true church. It is an article of faith, which has been conſtantly held in the church; this having always been an unqueſtioned and current maxim, that he who will not have the church for his mother, ſhall not have God for his father. " Whence St. *Jerom*¶, being in the " eaſt, where there was ſome diviſion con- " cerning the names of the three perſons of the " Bleſſed Trinity, wrote to Pope *Damaſus* that he was reſolved " never to depart from him, but inſeparably to unite himſelf to " him, as to one who held the chair of St. *Peter*, upon which, " ſays he, I know that the church is built. Adding, that the " church thus built is the only houſe, where it is lawful to eat " the paſchal lamb; the ark of *Noah*, out of which during the " flood none were ſaved; he, that does not gather with the Pope, " ſcattereth; that is, he, who is not united to *Jeſus Chriſt*, aſſoci- " ates himſelf with Antichriſt."

*No ſalvation out of the true church, unleſs for thoſe who labour under an inevitable and involuntary neceſſity, or an invincible ignorance.*

Fifthly, we are alſo obliged to believe that this true church is infallible in her judgments in matters of faith, and doctrine concerning manners: whether ſhe be aſſembled in the perſons of her paſtors and head, the Pope and Biſhops, or be not aſſembled, ſhe univerſally holds one and the ſame doctrine. This is alſo an article of faith, grounded upon the word of the Son of God, who has

*The church is infallible.*



* Mat. xvi. 18, 19. † John xxi. 17. ‡ St. Cyprian de uniat. Eccleſiæ. § St. Jerom lib. 1. contrà Jovinian. ¶ Ep. 57.

promiſed that *the gates of hell ſhall not prevail againſt it**, his church: from whence it follows, that ſhe never either fell, or ever will fall into the leaſt error in points of faith: ſhe being the *pillar and ground of the truth*†.

From what we have hitherto ſaid, we muſt conclude that all faithful Chriſtians, who deſire to ſecure their faith, and to avoid error in a matter of ſo great concern, muſt inſeparably adhere, as far as is in their power, the Holy Catholic, Apoſtolic, and *Roman* church, and hear and follow her judgment and doctrine in all things.

## ARTICLE IV.

*What we are obliged to believe concerning the Sacraments.*

WE are obliged to believe, Firſt, that they are the means inſtituted by God, whereby he confers his grace upon us, either to encreaſe what we have already received, or to reſtore what we had loſt, as it is expreſſed in the council of *Trent*‡.

Secondly, that a *ſacrament* may be rightly defined; "a viſible "ſign of inviſible grace, inſtituted by God for our ſanctification."

Thirdly, that this viſible ſign conſiſts, and is as it were compoſed of two parts, *the ſenſible thing*, which is applied in the ſacrament, as water in baptiſm: and the *words* which are pronounced, as in the ſame baptiſm theſe words: *I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt*. According to that received doctrine delivered by St. *Auguſtine*, "By the joining "of the words with the element, or material thing, the ſacrament "becomes compleat §." One of theſe two parts is called the matter, the other the form of the ſacrament.

Fourthly, that the ſacrament being applied by a lawful miniſter, either gives or augments ſanctifying grace in the ſoul of the worthy receiver.

Fifthly, that there are ſeven ſacraments, baptiſm, confirmation, euchariſt, penance, extreme unction, order, matrimony.

Baptiſm makes us the children of *Jeſus Chriſt*, waſhing away the ſtain of original ſin, and reſtoring our ſouls to the life of grace; whence St. *Paul* calls baptiſm, *the laver of regeneration, and renovation of the Holy Ghoſt*¶.

Confirmation ſtrengthens us in that new life, making us encreaſe in grace, and fortifying the faith we received in baptiſm.

The

* Mat. xvi. 18. † 1 Tim. iii. 15. ‡ Seſſ. 7 Procem. § St. Aug. tract. 80. in Joan. ¶ Tit. iii. 5.

The holy euchariſt is the nouriſhment of the ſoul, repairing thoſe damages which charity daily ſuffers from human frailty.

Penance reſtores to us the grace of God which we had loſt by ſin.

Extreme unction gives us ſtrength at the hour of death, that we may be the better able to fight againſt our ſpiritual enemies, and is a remedy againſt ſpiritual weakneſs, contracted by our former ſins. It alſo reſtores corporal health, when expedient.

Order conſecrates the miniſters of *Chriſt*, and gives them power to confer the ſacraments.

Matrimony ſanctifies the contract betwixt man and woman, and gives them grace to comply with the obligations which they draw upon themſelves by that indiſſoluble bond inſtituted by God for the propagation of mankind, and raiſed to the dignity of a ſacrament by our Saviour *Chriſt*.

Although all the ſacraments produce ſanctifying grace, yet they do not every one produce it in the ſame manner; for there are two, *viz.* baptiſm and penance, inſtituted for the remiſſion of ſins, which confer it upon thoſe whom they find void of grace, whence they are called the ſacraments of the dead; that is to ſay, of thoſe who are in the ſtate of mortal ſin, whom they raiſe up to the life of grace; whereas all the reſt are called the ſacraments of the living, in as much as they encreaſe the grace they find precedently in the ſoul; and to receive any of theſe worthily, it is neceſſary that we be in the ſtate of grace.

The ſoul in each ſacrament is not only ſanctified by habitual, but alſo endowed with actual grace, that is, with a vigour and ſtrength towards the compaſſing of thoſe particular effects for which it was firſt inſtituted.

Moreover, there are three which imprint a character in the ſoul, baptiſm, confirmation, and order: this character is a ſpiritual mark or ſeal by which God diſtinguiſhes the ſoul of him who receives any of theſe three ſacraments; and as this diſtinctive mark can never be effaced, none of theſe three ſacraments can be reiterated, or received a ſecond time by the ſame perſon without a ſacrilege.

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## CHAP. III.

### *Of the* Holy Euchariſt.

ALL that we have hitherto ſaid, whether of faith in general, or in particular of the divinity itſelf, of the incarnation of

the Son of God, of the holy church, and of the ſacraments, ſerves only as ſo many ſteps or diſpoſitions to the belief of the bleſſed ſacrament of the altar, and to render the underſtanding of this adorable myſtery more eaſy to us; which therefore we ſhall here endeavour to explain in few words.

I ſhall reduce what we are obliged to know concerning it into three heads: 1. The real preſence of the Son of God in this ſacrament. 2. The effects it produces. 3. The diſpoſitions neceſſary to receive it.

## ARTICLE I.

### *Of the real preſence of the Son of God in the* Holy Euchariſt, *and of what we are to believe concerning this ſacrament.*

WE are obliged to believe, that it is a ſacrament inſtituted by *Jeſus Chriſt*, wherein he gives us really and truly his body and blood, under the ſpecies or exterior appearance of bread and wine, for our ſpiritual nouriſhment and refection.

This general aſſertion contains ſeveral parts, which ought to be well underſtood, and for this reaſon I ſhall explain every one of them in order.

Firſt then, we believe that it is a *ſacrament*, that is a viſible ſign of inviſible grace, inſtituted by God for our ſanctification.

Secondly, we believe that this ſacrament contains *really Jeſus Chriſt* whole and entire, that is, his body and blood, his ſoul and divinity.

Thirdly, that *under the ſpecies* in the ſacrament there remains nothing of the ſubſtance, but only the appearance of bread and wine; both ſubſtances being truly changed into the body and blood of the Son of God; ſo that what we ſee of bread and wine, as ſize, figure, colour, ſmell, taſte, *&c.* are only the outward and ſenſible appearance of bread and wine.

Fourthly, that God by his almighty power works this wonderful change by virtue of the words of conſecration, in that very moment in which the prieſt, in the perſon of *Jeſus Chriſt*, makes an end of pronouncing them.

Fifthly, that in virtue of theſe divine words the body of the Son of God, without departing from heaven where he ſtill remains, becomes really preſent under the ſpecies of bread, not by itſelf or all alone, but together with his blood, his ſoul and divinity:

divinity: and his blood alſo under the ſpecies of wine, not ſingly by itſelf, but accompanied with his body, his ſoul, and his divinity.

Sixthly, that when the hoſt is divided, the Son of God is not divided, nor broken; but having the ſpiritual endowments of a glorified body, is entire in each ſmall particle of the hoſt; ſo that he who receives any, though the leaſt part of the hoſt, receives *Jeſus Chriſt* whole and entire, as much as if he had received the whole hoſt. And when the hoſt is conſumed, the body of the Son of God is not conſumed nor corrupted; that divine body being incapable of any alteration: what happens to it in that moment is only this; it ceaſes to be in the ſacrament, when the appearance of bread or wine ceaſes to exiſt.

## ARTICLE II.

### *Of the effects of the Holy Euchariſt.*

FROM what has been ſaid, it is eaſy to judge of the great effects this ſacrament ought to produce. As God has wrought all theſe ſo incomprehenſible wonders for our ſake, they muſt needs be deſigned to work in us moſt powerful effects of his grace.

The Son of God by his infinite wiſdom has compriſed them all in one word, ſaying: *My fleſh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed: he that eateth my fleſh, and drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I* interchangeably abide *in him* who eats me*.

The fleſh of the Son of God, as a divine nouriſhment, works in the ſoul of the worthy receiver the ſame effects ſpiritually, which the beſt corporal nouriſhment produces corporally in the body of thoſe who take it. Now the effects of corporal nouriſhment are four or five. 1. It preſerves life. 2. It gives increaſe to the body. 3. It ſtrengthens it. 4. It preſerves it againſt diſtempers. Laſtly, it enables us to labour, and to comply with all our reſpective duties. By theſe we may judge of the effects of the holy Euchariſt.

The firſt is the preſervation of grace, which is the life of the ſoul, and therefore it is called the *bread of life*†, and Chriſt's *fleſh for the life of the world*‡. *First effect.*

The ſecond is the encreaſe of this ſame grace, and of the Chriſtian virtues, faith, hope, and charity. This effect, however it *Second effect.*



* Joh. vi. 56, 57. † Joh. vi. 48. ‡ Ib. 52.

be common to all the ſacraments, yet it is more peculiar to this, as being more particularly inſtituted for the nouriſhment of the ſoul, and to make it increaſe in a ſpiritual life.

*Third effect.* The third is, courage to fight againſt ſin, and the temptations which incline to it. "It is "a preſervative againſt mortal, and a remedy "againſt venial ſin*."

*Fourth effect.* The fourth effect is the healing of all ſpiritual diſtempers, the paſſions and diſorderly affections of the ſoul: The abatement of our concupiſcence, or the giving of new ſtrength to overcome it: The weakening of anger, envy, pride, and other vices. "If any one "does not find ſo frequent or ſo violent motions of anger, envy, "impurity, or of other like paſſions, let him give thanks to the "body and blood of our Lord; for it is the virtue of the ſacra- "ment which produces in him theſe effects; and let him rejoice, "that the worſt of ulcers begins to heal†."

*Fifth effect.* The laſt is perſeverance in the grace of God, and in the way of ſalvation, in the midſt of the various and imminent dangers which we encounter in this life, and particularly when we draw near death; whence it was given formerly to martyrs when they were ready to ſuffer for the name of *Jeſus Chriſt*: and the church always takes care to impart this ſacrament to the ſick when they are in danger of death, that ſo they may be ſtrengthened in that dangerous paſſage, and happily arrive at the haven of ſalvation by means of this divine nouriſhment, thence called the *Viaticum*.

All theſe admirable effects evidently prove the greatneſs and excellence of this divine ſacrament, and ought effectually to move us frequently to approach to it, and not neglect ſo many and ſo ſignal favours, as God there preſents to us. But remember that it does not produce theſe effects, except in ſuch perſons, as are rightly diſpoſed to receive it.

## ARTICLE III.

*Of the diſpoſitions required to communicate as we ought.*

CORPORAL nouriſhment requires three diſpoſitions, *Life*, *Health*, and *Action*; it being manifeſt that the body cannot receive nouriſhment unleſs it be living, nor digeſt that nouriſhment unleſs

* Conc. Trid. Seſſ. 13. c. 2. † St. Bernard Serm. de cœna Domini.

unleſs it be in health, nor receive any benefit from thence unleſs by its action it aſſiſts in converting the food into its own ſubſtance, and uſing the ſtrength it receives.

Thus the Euchariſt, that celeſtial food, requires three diſpoſitions in the ſoul. The firſt is ſanctifying grace, which is the *life* of the ſoul, which cannot continue with mortal ſin, which deprives us of this ſupernatural life of the ſoul. Without this life the ſoul not only receives no benefit from communion, but ſuffers alſo much detriment from this holy table, in as much as ſhe becomes guilty of a new mortal ſin, a ſacrilege, which ſhe commits by receiving the author of life into the habitation of death, the author of light into the place of darkneſs; and *Jeſus Chriſt* into the company of the Devil. This made St. *Paul* warn all communicants to examine themſelves well when they approach to this holy table; becauſe *He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himſelf**. *Firſt diſpoſition.*

The ſecond diſpoſition is the interior *health* of the ſoul, which requires firſt, that ſhe be free from any affection to venial ſin. Secondly, that ſhe be not governed either by paſſions or affections that may hinder her from preparing to receive *Jeſus Chriſt*. And although theſe defects do not render the communicant abſolutely unworthy, or the communion ſacrilegious, yet they cauſe very ill effects, and conſiderably diminiſh the fruits which otherwiſe it would produce. They hinder the ſoul from digeſting this ſacred food by good thoughts and holy affections. And as nouriſhment which lies indigeſted on the ſtomach, cauſes ſickneſs in the body; ſo this divine ſuſtenance, by means of theſe indiſpoſitions, becomes prejudicial to the ſoul. Thereby we contract tepidity and coldneſs in devotion. Charity and other virtues are conſiderably diminiſhed, our good actions become weak and feeble, and ourſelves by degrees inſenſible to all that conduces to piety: And thus by degrees we are often drawn into mortal ſin. *Second diſpoſition.*

The third diſpoſition is *Action*, that is, actual devotion, which is requiſite when we receive the Holy of Holies, and the author of holineſs itſelf. This devotion conſiſts in the practice of chriſtian virtues, of which we ſhall ſpeak in Part II. of this inſtruction. *Third diſpoſition.*



* 1 Cor. xi. 28, 29.

## ARTICLE IV.

### *Of an unworthy communion.*

AN ancient lawgiver being aſked why he had made no laws againſt parricides, made anſwer, becauſe he ſuppoſed that crime to be impoſſible, and that there could not be found children, ſo degenerate and unnatural, as to attempt the life of their own parents. I wiſh we could ſay the ſame with truth concerning unworthy communion, or that we could truly ſay that in giving inſtructions for communion, it is not neceſſary to forewarn Chriſtians to avoid that ſo horrid a ſacrilege, as being unheard of among them. Alas! the contrary is too true. This crime, though a thouſand times greater, yet is much more common among Chriſtians than that of parricide. They have an horror (and with good reaſon) of depriving thoſe of breath, from whom they received their life; yet they are not afraid of murdering and crucifying again, as much as in them lies, our Saviour *Chriſt*, by receiving him into a polluted breaſt. Nature has imprinted in them a deep and laſting reſpect for thoſe from whom they have only received a mortal and fading life; but they eaſily forget the reverence they owe to *Jeſus Chriſt*, notwithſtanding he nouriſhes them with his own ſubſtance, his precious *Blood*, and offers them by his preſence a ſpiritual and immortal life, and a pledge of everlaſting happineſs. Is it poſſible then there ſhould be found ſouls capable of ſo black a deed, ſo horrible a crime? Surely they are only thoſe, who either have no faith, or ſuch as have never conſidered the enormity of this ſin, who can commit it; for he muſt ſurpaſs the very Devils in malice, who falls into ſuch a ſin, if he have but the leaſt knowledge how grievous a crime it is, and what dreadful conſequences follow from it.

*The enormity of the ſin of an unworthy communion.*

The enormity of this ſin appears: 1. From that remarkable ſaying of our Lord himſelf, *Give not that which is holy to dogs* *. If it be a great ſacrilege to give to dogs things conſecrated to God; what crime muſt it needs be to give the holy of holies to a ſoul an enemy to God, more impure and filthy than the very dogs? and what ſin muſt it be in thoſe to receive the body of our Lord, who being no better than dogs, as it is ſaid in the *Apocalypſe* †, and being under this character excluded.

* Mat. vii. 6. † Apocalypſe xxii. 15.

ed from the ſanctuary, yet have the impudence to eat the bread of children, the bread of the very angels themſelves?

2. From that ſerious charge of St. *Paul*, *Whoſoever ſhall eat this bread, or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, ſhall be guilty of the body and of the blood of the Lord**. This ſentence is a thunderbolt, which ought to terrify all thoſe who are ſo miſerably unfortunate as to communicate in mortal ſin. They are *guilty of the body and of the blood* of the Son of God: that is, they deſpiſe and injuriouſly treat this adorable body and blood, whilſt they receive it into a profane place, into the temple of ſatan, into a ſoul polluted with mortal ſin. It is particularly verified on this occaſion what St. *Paul* relates elſewhere †, that it is to crucify *Jeſus Chriſt again*, to ſcoff at him, to trample him under foot, and ſpill his blood by which they were ſanctified. Can we think of theſe things without horror? We never call to mind without a certain deteſtation the inhuman treatment the *Jews* and ſoldiers gave to our Saviour *Jeſus Chriſt* in the time of his bitter paſſion; and can we be ſo inſenſible in our own caſe, as not to deteſt thoſe affronts we offer him, even worſe than thoſe of the *Jews*, whilſt we unworthily receive him?

St. *Chryſoſtom* explaining thoſe words of St. *Paul*, *Whoſoever ſhall eat this bread, or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, ſhall be guilty of the body and of the blood of the Lord* ‡. "Why ſo? ſays "this holy father §, and his anſwer is, becauſe he has ſpilt that "blood, and by that action he has not offered a ſacrifice, but "committed a murther; for he who approaches unworthily to "this divine table, and receives no fruit from thence, reſembles "them, who formerly pierced the body of our Lord, not to "drink, but to ſhed his blood ¶. Conſider, ſays he, what juſt "indignation you conceive againſt him who betrayed *Jeſus Chriſt*, "and againſt thoſe who crucified him: therefore conſider leſt you "alſo be equally guilty of the body and blood of the Son of God. "It is true, they killed his moſt ſacred body, but you, after ſo "many and ſo often repeated benefits beſtowed upon you, receive "him into an unclean and polluted ſoul ‖.

"Unworthy communicants offer violence to the body of *Jeſus* "*Chriſt*, which ſin is a more grievous offence in the ſight of God, "than it is for a Chriſtian to abjure him before Infidels **."

3. You

* 1 Cor. xi. 27. † Heb. vi. 6. ‡ 1 Cor. xi. 27. § Hom. xxvii. ¶ St. Chryſoſt. hom. 27 in 1 Cor. xi. ‖ Hom. 60. ** St. Cyprian. de lapſis.

3. You must remember an unworthy communion is the sin of *Judas*. It was he who first committed it, and those who fall into it since, imitate his example and become his disciples. They receive him, as *Judas* did, in a guilty soul: they betray him not indeed to the *Jews*, but, which is worse, to the Devil who dwells in them. What punishment ought they not to dread from such an enormous crime? ought they not to remember how that perfidious Apostle was immediately possessed by the Devil in the moment that he received *Jesus Christ?* for since they imitate him in his sin, they cannot avoid being partakers of his punishment, as we shall presently see.

*The ill effects of an unworthy communion.*

Such a mischievous cause cannot but produce most fatal effects. The death of the soul, which it infallibly brings, is the first evil following from it. This death is an encrease of that other, wherein the soul lay buried before by the sin in which he received the sacrament. It is a farther banishment from the grace of God, and a farther subjection to the power of Satan.

From this death follow other most dismal effects, as the falling into new sins, spiritualness, encrease of vices and passions, which make a soul to groan under the yoke of her captivity, and hinder her from returning again to God by true repentance. The prophet has comprised these effects in few words, when speaking against the enemies of *Jesus Christ*, he prays to God thus: *Let their table become as a snare before them, and a recompense, and a stumbling block. Let their eyes be darkened that they see not, and their back bow thou down always**.

If those, who persecuted *Jesus Christ* without knowing him, are punished so severely, what ought not Christians to expect, when they knowingly treat him so ill in his own person. Histories are full of examples of divers punishments which God has inflicted upon this so detestable a sin.

St. *Paul*† attributes to the effect of unworthy communions the great number of distempers, and deaths with which the *Corinthians* were afflicted.

St. *Cyprian* affirms, "That in his time there were many whose "bodies were possessed by the Devil, for having communicated "unworthily; and also that many had lost their senses and be-

"come

* Psalm lxviii. 23. † 1 Cor. xi. 30.

" come diſtracted and mad upon the ſame account*." And St. *Chryſoſtom* aſſures us, that the ſame thing happened in his time.

The ſame St. *Cyprian* reports, " That a Chriſtian woman having " partaken in private of the ſacrifices of the idols, and coming not " long after to communicate with the Chriſtians, had no ſooner " received the Son of God, then ſhe found herſelf tormented, as " if ſhe had taken poiſon, and expired upon the ſpot."

He ſpeaks of another, " Who going to receive the precious " body of the Son of God in the ſtate of ſin, as ſhe opened the " veſſel in which it was encloſed, there iſſued out a flame of fire, " which prevented her receiving it. Another Chriſtian going to " do the ſame, inſtead of the conſecrated hoſt, which he expected " to have found in the place where he had reſerved it, found " nothing but aſhes."

He alſo recounts, that " a little child, to whom his pagan nurſe " had given a little wine conſecrated to the idols, being after- " wards carried by his mother to the church at the time of the " holy ſacrifice of the maſs, was not able to ſwallow one drop of " the conſecrated wine, which the deacon had put into his mouth. " The ſacred Euchariſt could not endure to ſtay in a body and " mouth defiled and profaned only by the touch of a forbidden " drink." But if it could not ſtay in this body, whoſe ſoul was altogether innocent, what may we ſay of thoſe, whoſe ſouls are altogether guilty?

Theſe examples are ſufficient to make every one reflect, " That " if he have not yet received the ſame puniſhment for his un- " worthy communion (if he have been guilty of it) he has never- " theleſs deſerved it as much as they. Let every one conſider " not ſo much the puniſhment which another has received, as " what he himſelf has deſerved; and that he do not believe he " has avoided the chaſtiſement, becauſe it is delayed; ſince he " ought rather to be much more afraid, to whom God in his juſt " judgment has deferred the puniſhment of his ſins to a longer " time."

ARTICLE

* St. Cyprian. de lapſis.

## ARTICLE V.

*Of the end we ought to propose to ourselves in the Holy Communion.*

*To communicate with an ill intention is vitious.*

BESIDES purity of conscience, it is necessary to have a right intention to communicate well; for an action, how good soever it may be in itself, loses its value for the want of a good intention, and moreover becomes evil and vitious, if it be done for an evil end. This being true in all good actions whatsoever, it is still much more in this of communion; for as much as it is certain, that nothing but what is pure and holy, ought to draw near to and receive purity and holiness itself, and that it is a contempt of the greatness and sanctity of God, to approach to him upon any other motive, than that of pleasing him and meriting his grace and favour.

For this reason in the Old Testament it was his will, that none should use upon his altar any other than holy fire, which he had ordained for the use of the sacrifices: and he punished with sudden death the two sons of *Aaron*, who were so rash as to make use of profane fire. By this figure we learn, that to approach to him, it is not sufficient to be holy, but there is also required an intention altogether pure and holy, and that an evil and profane intention does grievously offend him. We must then approach to the holy communion with an intention totally pure, and propose to ourselves an end altogether holy in this so great and so august an action: now that we may perform this duty, two things are necessary.

The first is not to propose to ourselves any evil end, as the motive of our communion; as hypocrisy, to dissemble and conceal some fault with an appearance of piety, vanity to be esteemed virtuous, human respect lest we should displease any one, or to please men rather than God. These three motives are but too frequent among those, who are not sufficiently instructed concerning the intention, which we ought to have in communicating, and particularly among young people: wherefore they ought most carefully to avoid them. The first is the greatest fault, and ordinarily speaking renders the communion sacrilegious; the other two deprive us of the best part of the fruit, it otherwise would produce.

The second is to direct our intention to the service of God and our salvation: to God, to please him the more and to unite ourselves thereby more strictly to him; to our salvation, to promote it by obtaining

obtaining, by means of the holy communion, the graces which we ſtand moſt in need of; as, to amend our faults; to reſiſt temptations; to ſtrengthen us in the practice of virtues.

Theſe two ends we find in our Lord's prayer; where the three firſt petitions contain what we can wiſh for the greater honour of God; and the other four comprehend what is neceſſary for our ſalvation. It is a very profitable exerciſe to propoſe to ourſelves for the end of our communion, the obtaining of the accompliſhment of theſe ſeven petitions of which this divine prayer conſiſts.

It is alſo good to add to this general intention ſome particular end, according to our preſent neceſſities; as, to obtain ſome particular grace we ſtand in need of, to correct in ourſelves ſome fault, and to advance in ſome particular virtue.

Laſtly, the right and religious intention which we ought to have in communion, is the very ſame which *Chriſt* propoſed to himſelf when he firſt inſtituted this divine ſacrament. Now his intention was, as he himſelf declared, that he might abide in us, and we in him *. He dwells in us by his grace, and the aſſiſtance of his holy inſpirations; and we remain in him by love, and the obedience we render to him: propoſe to yourſelf this end, and you will communicate according to the intention of *Jeſus Chriſt*.

* John vi. 57.

PART

## PART. II.

*Of the practice of communion, or what we muſt do to communicate as we ought.*

NEXT to the purity of conſcience and uprightneſs of intention, there remains a third diſpoſition, that we may communicate with more fruit, and obtain a larger portion of grace, and this is actual devotion, which we ought to have when we communicate.

There are almoſt innumerable ways of practiſing this devotion, but I am perſuaded there is none more profitable, and at the ſame time more ſolid, than that which is reduced to the practice of the three theological virtues, faith, hope, and charity.

Theſe three comprehend the practice of all other Chriſtian virtues: and as it is neceſſary that our ſouls be poſſeſſed of them to be in a condition to communicate worthily, one cannot better receive *Jeſus Chriſt* nor afford him a more grateful reception, than if, by way of preparation, in the time of communion, and immediately after it, are practiſed the acts of theſe three divine virtues.

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## CHAP. I.

*Of the neceſſity of faith to communicate well.*

WE have already declared in the firſt part, that faith is a gift of God, by which we believe the truths he has revealed to us. And this occaſioned a diſtinction which we muſt obſerve, as well in this virtue as in the other two, *viz.* betwixt faith as it is a virtue, and the ſame as it is an action.

The virtue of faith is that interior light given us by God, that we may know and believe the truth.

The action is the actual belief which we give to the truth revealed, when we ſay, I believe this truth.

The one and the other are neceſſary for communion: the virtue of faith, without which the communion would be criminal; and an act of faith is requiſite for obtaining the benefits annexed to it.

The great difficulty is not in having the virtue of faith; for all thoſe who are baptized have received it in baptiſm; and they preſerve it ſtill, except they have loſt it either by miſbelief, or any wilful doubt; in which caſe it muſt be repaired by believing, and doing penance. But

But as to what concerns acts of faith, they require an application of the mind and heart, to practiſe them as we ought, that is to ſay, with the neceſſary knowledge and conſtancy, whereof we are about to treat.

## ARTICLE I.

*To communicate well, it is not ſufficient to have faith, but we muſt practiſe the acts thereof, and how profitable they are in communion.*

WHOEVER then is without faith is an unworthy communicant, ſince *without faith it is impoſſible to pleaſe God**. And he that does not pleaſe God cannot receive worthily. It is alſo neceſſary to have faith not only in regard of all the myſteries of our religion, but in particular of this; and it is required that we have made acts of faith, which we have never revoked nor changed.

But I ſay moreover, that to receive the benefit of communion we muſt practiſe the acts of this faith before, at the time, and after communion; and that the chief fruit of this grand and important action depends upon the punctual performance of the acts of theſe three virtues, faith, hope, and charity.

*Why the communicant muſt make acts of faith.*

The reaſon is very obvious; for it is certain, that the ſacraments work their effects proportionably to the meaſure of the diſpoſition of the receiver; and that they give a far greater plenty of graces to thoſe who are interiorly better diſpoſed, and render themſelves more worthy of them: now this due preparation of the heart is made by acts of Chriſtian virtues, and particularly by thoſe of faith, hope, and charity, which are the firſt in dignity, and contain all the reſt. That which St. *Cyprian* affirms of the ſacrament of baptiſm is verified in all the others, but more eſpecially in that of the Holy Euchariſt: "That we draw from thence more grace, according to the greatneſs and capacity of the faith we bring with us; one needs no more than ardently deſire it, and open his heart to God, and give him room to fill it†." Where it is to be obſerved, that this holy father, in theſe excellent words, points out the three virtues we have already ſpoken of. He ſays, that with this ſtrong faith it is neceſſary that we deſire the grace of God, and open our hearts to receive it. Now we deſire by hope; and we open our hearts by charity and the love of God.

Moreover let us add, as the proper and peculiar reaſon for making acts of the theological virtues when we partake of the holy

* Heb. xi. 6. † Ep. ad Donat.

holy Eucharist, that it is a celestial banquet, wherein we receive the nourishment of our souls. Now who is there but knows that meat, except it be eaten with a good appetite, and with a stomach well disposed to digest the food by its natural heat, and to change it into its own substance, does little good? This is yet more certain in spiritual nourishment, which requires neither less action, nor concurrence of our soul to receive the benefit intended by it. And without a doubt we need not seek any other cause of the small advantage we draw from our communions, although in the state of grace, than the coldness and indevotion with which we perform this duty, which stops the hands of *Jesus Christ*, and hinders him from imparting his favours to those who receive him with so much indifference.

If this reason were not sufficiently convincing, I should add also (without leaving the comparison of a feast) that we ought indeed to come cloathed with the nuptial garment (that is, with sanctifying grace) to this sacred banquet of holy communion; but this ought not to satisfy those who desire to communicate in such manner, as to reap a suitable advantage from thence: for to let this suffice would be, as if a man, being invited to a feast by a person of quality, should content himself to go thither in his best apparel, but should refuse to discourse with him, or speak one word. What would we say of such behaviour as this? Would there not be just cause to judge, that this person had but little regard or esteem for him whose invited guest he was? and that he contemned, or at least slighted his friendship, and the particular favours which he might receive at his hands? And yet this is what you yourself are guilty of, *Theotime*, in respect of *Jesus Christ*, when you communicate with tepidity and devotion.

Remember, I beseech you, that it does not please our Lord to be received in this manner, and that you lose innumerable favours by this your extraordinary coldness. Consider how ill this corresponds with that pressing and ardent love with which he invites you to this feast, and with that earnest desire he has to receive you there, saying to you now, what formerly he did to his disciples: *With desire I have desired to eat this pasch with you* *.

Thus when he invites a soul to him, he does not only require that she appear in his presence, but he expects to hear her voice. *My dove*, says he, my well beloved soul, *shew me thy face, let thy voice sound in my ears: for thy voice is sweet, and thy face comely* †.

By

* Luke xxii. 15. † Cant. ii. 14.

By the face, he gives us to understand the beauty of the soul, which consists in sanctifying grace, and the ornament of virtues; and by the voice he points at the acts of these same virtues, which make a concert and harmony most pleasing to God.

## ARTICLE II.

### *Of the nature of acts of faith for communion.*

LET us now come to the practice of faith, and see how it must be employed in holy communion. That we may employ it to advantage, we must be well instructed in, and fully convinced of the truths relating to this divine mystery. Among these truths there are two, on which one may practise acts of faith with great advantage. 1. The real presence of the Son of God in the Eucharist, with the wonders which occur in this mystery. See Part I. Chap. 3. Art. I. 2. The effects which it produces in the soul of that person who worthily receives it. See Part I. Chap. II. Art. II. Exercise your faith upon these two points when you communicate, but see that they be acts of a stedfast and fervent faith.

### *An act of faith on the real presence of* Jesus Christ *in the blessed sacrament.*

MY Saviour *Jesus Christ*, I firmly believe from the bottom of my heart, that thou art truly present in the sacred host: I believe that it contains thy body and thy precious blood, accompanied with thy soul and thy divinity.

I believe that by virtue of the words of consecration, and in the moment they are pronounced, the bread is changed into thy body, and the wine into thy blood.

I believe this truth upon the assurance of thy holy words, and upon the authority of thy holy church, which thus teaches me to believe.

I believe it firmly, and without hesitation, renouncing from my heart all doubts, which may ever come into my mind concerning this article. *I do believe Lord; help thou my unbelief**. Believing thus, I adore thee in this blessed sacrament from my very soul, and I acknowledge thee for my Lord and for my God, as St. *Thomas* did†.

### *On the wonders which occur in the blessed sacrament.*

MY Lord and my God, I acknowledge all the mighty things which thou hast wrought in this holy mystery; grant me, I beseech thee, grace to understand them, for they far exceed the capacity of my soul. *Who shall declare the powers of the Lord? Who shall set forth all his praises*‡?



* Mar. ix. 23. † Joh. xx. 28. ‡ Psalm cv. 2.

I know by faith, and I acknowledge that thou art really in the facred hoft, without departing from heaven, where thou art feated on the right hand of thy eternal Father.

That thou art in innumerable places in the fame inftant, and in as many as there are confecrated hofts.

That the fubftance of bread and wine is changed into that of thy body and thy blood.

That of the bread and wine there remain only the appearances, without their fubftance which fupported them before, and that thou doft miraculoufly preferve them.

That thy body is in the whole hoft, and in every part thereof.

That it is as equally whole and entire under the leaft, as under the greateft hoft.

That when the hoft is broken thy body is not divided, but that it is entire in each part of the confecrated hoft.

That when the hoft is confumed thy body is not confumed, but only ceafes to be where it was before.

That the good and bad equally receive thee as to the reality; but unequally only as to the effect, the one finding life therein, the other death.

O my Saviour, I acknowledge all thefe truths: I firmly believe all thefe wonders; I adore thy power which has wrought them: I praife thy infinite goodnefs that was pleafed to prepare them for me; and I fay from the bottom of my heart with *David: I will give praife to thee, O Lord, with my whole heart: I will relate all thy wonders. I will be glad and rejoice in thee: I will fing praife to thy name**.

I acknowledge that thou haft really fulfilled in this myftery the prophecy of *David*†, wherein he faid, that as a fpecial effect of thy mercy, thou haft made an abridgment and memorial of thy wonders in beftowing food upon thofe who fear thee.

In this faith, and with this acknowledgment, I prefume to approach at prefent to this adorable banquet, where thou beftoweft upon me this divine food of thy body and blood, that thou mayft fill me with thyfelf and thy divine fpirit. O *Jefus!* grant that I may approach to thee with the fentiments of refpect and humility due to thy infinite majefty: Who am I, O my God, that thou fhouldft work fuch great wonders for my fake? Vouchfafe at leaft that I be not unworthy of them, and that I may now receive thee with a pure heart, with a clear confcience, and with a fincere and true faith. Pardon me my fins, which have rendered me moft unworthy

* Pfalm ix. † Pfalm cx. 4.

unworthy to approach thee. I deteſt them from the bottom of my heart, becauſe, O my God, they are diſpleaſing to thee: I here renounce them for the future, and I promiſe to be faithful to thee. Proceed then, my ſoul, raiſe thyſelf up to go and receive thy God; and to receive at his hands all the favours which he has prepared for thee in this divine ſacrament. *Turn, O my ſoul into thy reſt, for the Lord hath been bountiful to thee**.

*On the effects which the Holy Euchariſt produces in the ſoul.*

IF you have time before communion, acknowledge in the preſence of God the admirable effects which it produces: deſire earneſtly to be partaker of them, and ſay from the bottom of your heart as follows.

I acknowledge, O Saviour of ſouls, the wonderful effects which thou workeſt in thoſe who worthily receive thee; the many and ſingular tokens of thy love thou beſtoweſt upon them, and the favours thou communicateſt to them.

I acknowledge, that as a divine food thou filleſt our ſouls with thyſelf; thou preſerveſt in us the life of thy grace; thou makeſt us encreaſe more and more therein; thou ſtrengtheneſt us in our weakneſs; thou cureſt our infirmities; thou preſerveſt us from ſin; thou giveſt us ſtrength to perſevere in thy grace, and to walk ſecure amidſt the dangers of this mortal life, till we come to everlaſting glory. O my God! bleſſed be thy holy name for theſe ſo many favours: make me worthy to partake of all thy mercies in this holy communion.

Approach to the communion with this faith, ſaying with the infirm woman in the goſpel: *If I ſhall but touch his garment I ſhall be healed*†.

After communion, withdrawing yourſelf from the holy table into ſome convenient place, adore profoundly our Lord, who has vouchſafed to come and dwell within you; and conſidering attentively the great favours which he has beſtowed upon you by his divine preſence, pronounce from your heart thoſe excellent words of *David: Let the mercies of the Lord give glory to him: and his wonderful works to the children of men. For he hath ſatisfied the empty ſoul; and hath filled the hungry ſoul with good things*‡. O my God, be thou bleſſed for ſo many favours which thou haſt now beſtowed upon me, and for all the bleſſings with which thou haſt



* Pſ. cxiv. 7. † Mat. ix. 21. ‡ Pſ. cvi. 8, 9.

enriched me, after the great want and miseries which I endured, when by my pleasures and my passions I had departed from thee. Was not I most miserable and blind, to seek in these vain pleasures repose and happiness, which are not to be found but in thee alone? I removed myself to a far distance from thee to ruin myself for ever; but thy goodness was such, that it withdrew me from the precipice whither I was running, enlightening me with thy rays, and calling me back to thee by thy grace. Thou hast pardoned me all my sins, and to complete all these favours, thou gavest thyself to me that I may dwell with thee. O my God! be thou blessed for all these infinite mercies, and let all the saints supply my defects, and praise thee in my behalf *.

Stir up your soul, that is, yourself, to praise God for all the benefits which he has at present conferred upon you, with those grateful sentiments of the same prophet †, considering them attentively one after another.

*Bless the Lord, O my soul, and let all that is within me* praise *his holy name.*

*Bless the Lord, O my soul, and never forget all he hath done for thee: who forgiveth all thy iniquities: who healeth all thy diseases: who redeemeth thy life from destruction: who crowneth thee with mercy and compassion: who satisfieth thy desire with good things: thy youth shall be renewed like the eagle's.*

After you have pondered well upon these sacred words, and raised in yourself all the motions of gratitude and acknowledgment to God for the many and great favours he has done you, you shall conclude with a strong resolution to renew yourself, that is to say, totally to change your life, to amend your faults, to dedicate yourself from henceforth entirely to God.

You must implore his grace to fulfil these resolutions; and to this effect you must beg of him a steady and constant faith, acts of which you have endeavoured to exercise in this communion: beseech him that he will vouchsafe to augment it, not only in respect of this holy mystery, but also in regard of all the other Christian truths, and principles of eternal life: to the end that by this faith you may surmount all the difficulties and obstacles you shall meet with in your journey thither; for it is most certain, that those who have this great virtue strongly imprinted in their souls, overcome all, whatsoever difficulties occur in the way of salvation, as St. *Paul* hath clearly shewn in his epistle to the *Hebrews*: *Through* ‡ *faith*

* Ps. cxliv. 10. † Ps. ciii. ‡ Chap. xi. 33.

*faith they ſubdued kingdoms, wrought juſtice, obtained promiſes* *. But all this is to be underſtood of an ardent faith, enlivened with the flames of charity.

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## CHAP. II.

### *Of Hope, the ſecond diſpoſition for Communion.*

HAving not yet ſaid any thing of this virtue, farther than what concerned the examen on the firſt commandment, where I related the ſins which are oppoſite unto it, I ſhall treat of it in this place ſo far as may be neceſſary to make it well known to all thoſe who are not ſufficiently inſtructed in it.

### ARTICLE I.

#### *What is Hope?*

IT is the ſecond of the three theological virtues. They are ſo called, becauſe God is not only their motive and end, (as in all other Chriſtian virtues) but alſo their firſt and principal object.

To expect from the hand of God the things he has promiſed and prepared for his ſervants, is the proper effect of this virtue; wherefore it is defined *a certain expectation of eternal bliſs, and of the means to attain it.* This expectation is the proper act of this virtue of hope; which is a certain judgment which we form, that God will be pleaſed to grant us everlaſting life, if we correſpond with his holy grace; for as St. *Bernard* obſerves very well, "Faith tells us there are great rewards prepared for God's ſer-"vants: Hope ſays, theſe are reſerved for me. Charity is the "third, and ſays, I run that I may reach them †." It is of this expectation, which the prophet ſpeaks, *The Lord is my portion, therefore will I wait for him* ‡. And St. *Paul*, when he aſſures us, *that* he glories in the hope of the glory, or happineſs *of the Sons of God* §; and when he exhorts all Chriſtians to a good life, *Looking for the bleſſed hope*, ſays he, *and coming of the glory of the great God, and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt* ¶.

This hope is certain and aſſured, in as much as it is built upon God's promiſe, who can never fail of his word, having both a will and a power to perform whatever he is pleaſed to promiſe. This



* Chap. xi. 33. † Serm. 10. in Pſalm xc. ‡ Lam. iii. 24. § Rom. v. 2. ¶ Tit. iii. 13.

made the ſame Apoſtle affirm, *I know whom I have believed, and I am certain that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him, againſt that day* *.

But whereas theſe divine promiſes are only conditional, and made to ſuch as are his faithful ſervants, our hope ought alſo always to ſuppoſe this condition of our fidelity; and thus the certainty of hope ought always to be accompanied with a holy diſtruſt in ourſelves, which makes us work our ſalvation with fear and trembling; and as St. *Peter* has it, *Labour that by good works* we *may make* our *calling and election ſure* †.

## ARTICLE II.

### *Of the Advantages which we expect through Hope.*

WE expect two advantages, Grace and Glory; this as the end prepared for us, that as the means whereby to obtain this end. God, is a tender and wiſe father, whoſe goodneſs prepares an inheritance for his children, and whoſe wiſdom finds out means, whereby they may come to the poſſeſſion of it.

*The glory of heaven deſcribed.*

Glory will be our ſupreme and final happineſs, wherein our ſoul ſhall ſee God as he is in himſelf face to face, and thence conceive ſo entire and perfect a love of him, that ſhe will be filled with an incomprehenſible joy, and a happineſs that ſhall not receive either the leaſt alteration or any end.

Even our body ſhall have its ſhare in this glory: for after the reſurrection the glorious ſplendour of the bleſſed ſoul, united to the body, ſhall by the reflection of her rays render it not only immortal, but exempt it from all poſſibility of change, endowing it with the four qualities, which St. *Paul* ‡ has diſcovered to us, Impaſſibility, Brightneſs, Agility, Subtilty. The firſt will exempt it from all pain or grief; the ſecond will render it bright and ſhining like the ſun; the third will enable it to fly in an inſtant, whereſoever it pleaſes without the leaſt trouble; and by the fourth, it will penetrate the moſt ſolid bodies.

Behold what we expect after this life both for our ſoul and body! And as to what concerns this preſent life, we expect from the hands of God the means whereby we may obtain this happy end: foraſmuch as of ourſelves, and by all our natural endeavours

* 2 Tim. i. 12. † 2 Pet. i. 10. ‡ 1 Cor. xv.

vours, though never ſo great, left to ourſelves, we are not able to arrive at it.

This end, in as much as it is a ſupernatural good, requires in our ſoul a diſpoſition proportionable to it, and this is ſanctifying grace, the ſeed of *Glory*, and the precious *pledge of* that eternal *inheritance* *. This grace is a ſupernatural quality infuſed by God into our ſoul at the inſtant he admits us into his friendſhip; a quality which remits ſin, ſanctifies the ſoul, embelliſhes and renders her acceptable to God, and gives her a certain right to life everlaſting †. *Grace explained.*

Now ſince this grace, this diſpoſition to glory, is alſo ſupernatural, it is neceſſary we have the aſſiſtance of a powerful hand to obtain it, and this can be no other than the hand of God, as there is none but God alone who can endow the ſoul with ſanctifying grace.

This aſſiſtance is called grace, becauſe it is gratuitouſly and out of God's pure mercy beſtowed upon us; but it is called actual, becauſe it is not habitual and permanent like ſanctifying grace. It is that action by which God moves the powers of our ſoul, our underſtanding and will, diſpoſing her to juſtification, and enlightening her underſtanding by good thoughts, which he inſpires her with; and moving her will by the holy affections which he vouchſafes to excite in her.

This aſſiſtance produces three effects in us; for firſt, it awakes our ſoul by interior illuminations and religious motions, exciting her to work out her ſalvation. 2dly. When ſhe is thus moved, it aſſiſts her in the due performance of that good, which is propoſed to her, and raiſes her up to God by acts of faith, hope, contrition, and the love of God, all which diſpoſe her to receive at the ſame time the remiſſion of her ſins, and juſtifying grace. 3dly. As ſoon as ſhe has received this grace, this aſſiſtance affords her ſtill means to preſerve herſelf againſt the violence of temptations, and to perſevere conſtant even to the end, by flying evil, and performing good works.

Hence proceed the different names by which we call this actual grace: for the firſt we call exciting, operating or preventing grace: the ſecond, aſſiſting or co-operating grace: the third, the grace of perſeverance. God has beſtowed upon us all theſe graces for our ſalvation; but we are to obſerve that they have not always their full and entire effect upon the will; for ſhe being only moved and



* Eph. i. 14. † Tit. iii. 7.

preſſed, and not neceſſitated by theſe graces, has a power either to reſiſt or neglect them, according as the council of *Trent** remarks; nay very often does reſiſt: for we are but too apt to harden our hearts againſt the voice of God, and reſiſt the Holy Ghoſt, as the ſcripture expreſſes it †.

This admonition may ſerve to teach us an important truth, that it is not enough to expect from God the means of ſalvation, but that we ought to take great care to be faithful to, and carefully to co-operate with his grace; and alſo that we ought daily to beg of him, that he will vouchſafe to continue and repleniſh our hearts therewith, leſt by our ſins we render ourſelves unworthy of them.

## ARTICLE III.

*It is neceſſary to diſtinguiſh well a righteous Hope from that which is vitious.*

THIS diſtinction is of the higheſt importance, for as much as the greateſt part of the world deceive themſelves therein, by miſtaking falſe for true hope; and from this miſtake proceeds the damnation of innumerable Chriſtians. There is no one but hopes to be ſaved; but becauſe their hopes are ill grounded, and they hope otherwiſe than they ought, they lull themſelves aſleep in this fooliſh hope, and approaching to their end, they find themſelves upon the brink of a precipice, when they imagined themſelves in ſafety.

*Several kinds of preſumption.*

Such is their hope who expect ſalvation though they live ill, and expect a happy death after a wicked life. Now how many are there of theſe? and what numbers are herein deceived.

Such is their hope who believe it neceſſary for ſalvation to live a good life, but ſtill defer their converſion, thinking that God will wait their repentance, notwithſtanding their wicked courſe of life, and their perpetual abuſe of his graces.

Such is their hope who ſin in confidence of pardon, and who are wont to ſay, when they have offended, that God's mercy is great, and that he will forgive their ſins.

Such is their hope who imagine they ſhall be converted whenſoever they pleaſe; or that his grace will be always in their power; or that, let them do what they will, it will never forſake them.

Such

* Seſſ. 6. c. 5. † Acts vii. 51.

Such is their hope who wilfully, and by some signal negligence of theirs, expose themselves to the immediate occasions of sin, in hopes that God will preserve them.

Such is the hope of many cold and negligent Christians, who relying upon a certain confidence of securing their salvation without much trouble, suffer themselves to sleep, employing remissly or seldom the means which God has been pleased to grant us, as most proper to preserve and encrease in us his grace, as prayer, the sacraments, and good works.

All these hopes are false and deceitful; and, like false lights, lead them into a precipice, instead of conducting them to salvation.

*True hope.*

Hope, which is good and true, expects not only from God the performance of his promises, but that this shall be done in the manner God has promised. She hopes to be partaker of glory by serving him with fidelity, as he has promised heaven to those who shall serve him, be faithful in complying with his graces, and shall persevere therein to the end.

She expects in this life grace, thereby to obtain glory; but endeavours at the same time not to put any obstacle on her side; she implores it with much fervour and humility, and as carefully complies with it. If in sin, she does penance without delay; yet never offends in hopes of doing penance; "but is fearful to commit a sin, which she does not know whether or no she shall "ever be sufficiently able to deplore*."

In a word, righteous hope walks always in the midst between confidence and fear: she trusts in God, and mistrusts herself. She hopes that God will not reject her, but she fears lest she should forsake her God: she hopes that God will assist her; but fears lest she herself prove unfaithful to his grace. And thus between this confidence and fear, humbling herself in the presence of God, she prays, she labours to secure her salvation by flying from sin, and by a due performance of good works.

*Acts comprised in hope.*

In short, hope consists in, or is attended with these four acts.

1. A confidence of obtaining from the divine goodness everlasting life, with all the graces necessary for acquiring it.

2. A vehement desire of salvation: for the expectation, which we have, of any great good is apt to raise in us an ardent desire of it.

3. A

* St. Greg. l. 33. in Tob. c. 15.

3. A fear to lose it by our fault, or any infidelity of ours; a fear which ought not to produce any disquiet in the soul, but the hatred of sin, which only can make us lose it.

4. A firm, and that an efficacious resolution to labour for salvation; a resolution which makes us act and employ the means necessary to obtain that end.

## ARTICLE IV.

### *The effects of Hope.*

WHEN this great virtue is well imprinted in a soul, it there produces wonderful effects.

*First effect.* First, It makes her love and desire heaven, her dear country; it makes her sigh after her eternal happiness; it makes her fear, lest she be frustrated of it by her fault, and lose herself among the dangers of this mortal life, so full of rocks whereon salvation so often suffers shipwreck.

*Second effect.* Secondly, It makes her love the divine goodness, which has prepared so great blessings for her, and afforded the means to acquire them.

*Third effect.* Thirdly, It makes her contemn this life; it disengages her from the love of these goods and pleasures, making her look upon them as transitory things, which pass like a shadow, and yet which are not obtained but with much trouble, nor possessed without solicitude, nor lost without great grief. For this reason the just man accounts himself in this life no otherwise than as the traveller seeking his native country, knowing well, that *here we have no lasting city*, or abode, *but we seek one to come* after this life *. And as it would be a folly in a traveller to set his affections upon a stately inn, and desire to make it his abode, so he, whose soul is full of the hopes of heaven, accounts it madness to pursue the goods of the earth, and in these trifles lose the opportunity of gaining heaven. St. *Augustine* observes that God by his wisdom has mingled afflictions and bitterness with all, even the most innocent goods of this life, so to disengage us from any affection to them: "Lest man, who is a "traveller upon his way to heaven, taking his pleasure in this "life, should love an inn better than his own house †."

*Fourth effect.* Fourthly, This hope makes the just man labour for his salvation, and becoming daily more

* Heb. xiii. 14. † In Psal. xl.

more holy render himſelf worthy of his heavenly vocation. *Every one that hath this hope in him* (God), *ſanctifieth himſelf, as he alſo is holy**. This hope gives him ſtrength to conquer all difficulties, and wings to fly in the way of God's commandments. *They that hope in the Lord ſhall renew their ſtrength, they ſhall take wings as eagles, they ſhall run and not be weary, they ſhall walk and not faint* †.

Fifthly, This ſame hope encourages us in temptations, and gives ſtrength to encounter them. For what greater encouragement can there be on theſe occaſions, than to know that God is with us? that he aſſiſts us to fight and overcome? and that he has prepared an eternal reward for thoſe that conquer? He whoſe heart is repleniſhed with this hope, does he not ſay with *David*, whenſoever he is tempted? *I will fear no evils, for thou art with me, O Lord* ‡, *The Lord is my light and my ſalvation whom ſhall I fear* §. *If a battle ſhould riſe up againſt me, in this will I be confident* ¶. *O Lord, my God, in thee have I put my truſt, ſave me from all them that perſecute me, and deliver me* ‖. For this reaſon St. *Paul* calls hope the helmet of Chriſtians. *Having on for a helmet the hope of ſalvation***: For as a head-piece it preſerves us from the blows of the enemy, and the mortal wounds which he endeavours to give us. *Fifth effect.*

In fine, hope is of infinite uſe in afflictions, of which this mortal life is full. Herein we find our refuge, our comfort, and our ſtrength; when we conſider with attention that theſe miſeries cannot laſt always, that they muſt have an end, and will be followed by eternal joy, if we ſuffer them with neceſſary patience, and when we ponder well upon thoſe excellent words of St. *Paul*, *Our preſent tribulation which is momentary and light, worketh for us above meaſure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory* ††. *Sixth effect.*

It is then, after the example of this glorious Apoſtle, we rejoice and eſteem ourſelves happy in our afflictions, being aſſured that *tribulation worketh patience; and patience trial; and trial hope; and hope confoundeth not;* ſo as to permit our expectations to be diſappointed ‡‡. Wherefore the ſame Apoſtle ſays §§, that this holy hope is to Chriſtians, that which the anchor is to a ſhip, which keeps it ſecure and ſteady amidſt the tempeſtuous waves, and preſerves it againſt the violence of winds.

O

* 1 Joh. iii. 3. † Iſai. xl. 31. ‡ Pſalm xxii. 4. § Pſalm xxvi. 1. ¶ Pſalm xxvi. 3. ‖ Pſalm vii. 1. ** 1 Theſ. v. 8. †† 2 Cor. iv. 17. ‡‡ Rom. v. 3, 4, 5. §§ Heb. vi. 19.

O holy virtue, what blessings by thy means accrue to us, did we but know them! Endeavour, *Theotime*, to make thyself master of this great virtue, and to practise it with advantage to thy soul; to this effect peruse carefully what we say in short on this subject.

## ARTICLE V.

*The Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist is of great use to fortify and augment the virtue of Hope.*

GOD endowed us with this virtue, when first he justified us in baptism, where we received sanctifying grace, with the gifts of faith, hope, and charity, and other Christian virtues.

It is encreased, like other virtues, by frequent acts, and by good works performed in the state of grace. Moreover it receives much strength and a wonderful encrease, by the most blessed sacrament of the Eucharist; which may easily be evinced from the two things, which are the object of hope, *viz.* grace in this life, and in the next the glory both of body and soul.

*The Eucharist confirms our hope of glory.*

As for glory, there is not any thing that confirms us more in the hope of it than this divine sacrament, wherein we receive him in person, the possession of whom will compleat our glory and happiness. For what greater security can we have of hereafter enjoying God himself than his bounty in communicating himself to us in this life? Could he afford us a more secure pledge than himself, and the assurance of his word, saying, *he that eateth this bread shall live for ever* *?

And for the glory of the body, it is no less confirmed to us by this sacrament, the son of God having told us, *He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath everlasting life: and I will raise him up in the last day* †. Indeed the fathers of the church have often proved the resurrection from the Holy Eucharist. They assure us, that the life-giving flesh of *Jesus Christ*, as they frequently called it, has a particular virtue to raise from death to life those bodies it shall touch, as the bones of *Elizeus* had virtue by their touch to to raise a dead man to life.

*It affords us hope of graces.*

This truth is no less certain in respect of grace. For if we consider habitual or sanctifying grace, this divine sacrament is a powerful means to preserve it, and also to encrease it in the

* Joh. vi. 59. † Joh. vi. 55.

the ſoul in a high degree, as often as we ſhall worthily receive it. And as for actual graces, which are ſo many helps which the divine goodneſs has beſtowed upon us for our continuance in his friendſhip, and the pious motions he inſpires us with to avoid evil, and employ ourſelves totally in good, and the many protections which he affords us when our ſalvation is in danger, it is without doubt to this ſacrament that we owe the greateſt part thereof, as we have ſhown above in Part I. Chap. III Art. II. Becauſe this ſacrament containing *Jeſus Chriſt*, the author and ſource of all bleſſings, it muſt needs communicate them in abundance to thoſe who worthily receive it. If by the other ſacraments we are enriched with ſo many graces only by that virtue which the Son of God has annexed to them; how many more may we in reaſon expect from this, where the ſame Son of God is preſent, not only by his virtue, but in perſon?

God formerly gave *Manna* to the *Iſraelites*, and ſuſtained them therewith for the ſpace of forty years, the time of their pilgrimage towards the land of promiſe through the deſert. This *Manna* fell every *night*, as the ſcripture remarks*, with the dew from heaven, which bedewed the whole camp of *Iſrael*. With how much more reaſon may we affirm, that none ever receive this celeſtial *Manna*, the Holy Euchariſt, (of which the other was only a figure) but finds his ſoul repleniſhed with abundance of graces and divine bleſſings? If this heavenly bread is ſhowered upon us for the nouriſhment of our ſouls, it certainly works the ſame in her, which wholſome food does in the body. Now corporal nutriment has theſe four effects: it preſerves, increaſes, ſtrengthens, and refreſhes the body. It is neceſſary therefore that this ſpiritual food have the ſame operations in our ſouls, as we have already made out in the firſt part of this treatiſe, Chap. III. Art. II.

It was a figure of this truth, when the Prophet *Elias* †, flying the perſecution of *Jezabel*, received from the hand of an angel a loaf of bread, which maintained him through his whole journey: and the ſcripture affirms ‡, that having eaten that bread, he received ſuch ſtrength, that, without any farther ſuſtenance, he travelled full forty days, even to the mountain *Horeb*, which is interpreted the ſight of God.

AR-

* Num. xi. 9. † 3 Kings xix. ‡ Ver. 8

## ARTICLE VI.

*The practice of Hope is a good disposition to communicate well.*

IF the blessed sacrament confirms in us the virtue of hope, in order to communicate well we must before-hand exercise the acts of, and have our hearts replenished with this said virtue of hope: because as heat is natural to fire, and fire does not communicate its effects but to the subject which is already hot; it is necessary that the same heat should be introduced into that matter where one would have the fire to act: for the natural qualities of any thing whatever serve as dispositions to give it both a being and action. Since therefore the Holy Eucharist is a sacrament, which so powerfully revives our hope, to receive this sacrament with advantage, it is necessary that we be full of this virtue, and stir up ourselves the most we can to it, when we approach this holy table.

And truly if we consider the particular acts of which this virtue is composed, we shall find, that they are the most usual dispositions to communion: we have marked them out above in Art. III. an expectation of eternal life; a desire of obtaining it; a fear of losing it by any sin; and a resolution of effectually labouring for it.

## ARTICLE VII.

*Acts of Hope for Communion.*

THESE acts are the four of which we have already spoken, to which we must join a sorrow for sin, which has set us at so great a distance from the divine grace, and from eternal glory, and prayer, by which we beg of God both grace and glory. One may reap much fruit from the practice of these pious acts before and after communion.

*An Act of Hope before Communion.*

ADdressing your thoughts and heart to our Lord, who is present in the sacred host, acknowledge that he is your only hope, and that it is from him alone you expect all blessings, both of grace and glory.

O *Jesus*, my Saviour and my God, I adore thee in this sacred host, where thou art present, to be to me a Saviour. Thou art my only hope, it is from thee alone I expect all my happiness, whether in this life or the next, saying with *David: And now what is my hope, is it not the Lord? And my substance, is with thee* *.

Or,

* Psalm xxxviii. 8.

Or, *My hope, O Lord, from my youth* *. I hope that thou wilt by thy grace conduct me safe in this, and repleniſh me with glory in the next. What bleſſings may not I expect from thy hands in this bleſſed ſtate; ſince thy bounty has vouchſafed ſo liberally to beſtow thyſelf upon me in this unhappy vale of tears? Thou giveſt me hopes of poſſeſſing thee one day face to face; ſince thou haſt been ſo good as to give thyſelf to me in the bleſſed ſacrament.

O ineſtimable pledge of my future felicity, when ſhall that happy hour come that I ſhall ſee thee face to face, with all the bleſſings thou haſt prepared for thoſe that ſerve thee? O my God, how lovely are thoſe manſions where thou art clearly ſeen! My ſoul ſighs after them. My heart and my very fleſh leap for joy, in the hopes I ſhall once poſſeſs the living God.

I am fixed in my hope, and I know that there is not any thing, except my ſins, which can ever fruſtrate my deſires. Wherefore I here deteſt them all from the bottom of my heart. Proſtrate in thy preſence, O my God, with a contrite and humble heart I beg pardon; and for the future I am reſolved to fly ſin, more than death itſelf.

It is in this pious confidence and hope that I approach at preſent to this holy communion, there to receive thee hidden under the ſacramental ſpecies, and to taſte before hand theſe infinite bleſſings which thou haſt prepared for me in everlaſting life, where I ſhall be ſo happy as to ſee thee as thou art in thyſelf. O my God, exclude me not from this holy table, which thou haſt prepared for me in this mortal life, to the end I may deſerve to be admitted to that other, which thou haſt appointed in everlaſting life to feaſt thy faithful ſervants. It is true, my ſins have made me unworthy of either of them: yet I hope in thy mercy, which has been pleaſed to pardon them, and which will confirm that pardon by ſtrengthening the reſolution I have conceived of being faithful to thee. Come then, O divine Saviour, enter and take poſſeſſion of me; ſpeak to my ſoul a word of comfort †, tell her, that thou art her ſtrength, her ſalvation, and her ſovereign good. Tell her, as once thou didſt *Abraham: Fear not, I am thy protector*, amidſt the greateſt dangers of this life: I am thy *exceeding great reward*, an infinite and incomprehenſible recompence in the next ‡. Grant I beſeech thee, that I may rightly underſtand theſe important truths; and that this may be the fruit of the communion, which I am about to receive.

When

* Pſalm lxx. 5. † Pſalm xxxiv. 3. ‡ Gen. xv. 1.

When you have pondered well upon these holy thoughts, approach to the sacred table, with an earnest desire of possessing your God, and in hopes of receiving in this communion an abundant supply of graces which may make him abide in you, and you in him.

*After Communion.*

AS soon as you are retired from the holy table, adore with all humility our Lord, whom you have received: return him innumerable thanks for the infinite favour he has done you in coming to you; after this employ yourself in the practice of these three acts of the virtue of hope.

An earnest desire of eternal salvation.

A strong resolution to labour in attaining it. And

Prayer to implore that grace at the hands of God, and the necessary means of securing your salvation.

*Adoration.* First then, addressing your thoughts to our Lord, whom you have received, represent to yourself that you possess him, who constitutes the happiness of the saints, and *on whom the Angels desire to look**. In this belief speak to him from your heart as follows.

I adore thee, O infinite greatness, O divine majesty, who fillest both heaven and earth, and art adored in heaven by all the blessed Angels and saints, who incessantly praise and cry out before thee: *Holy, holy, holy Lord God of Sabaoth†:* how is it possible, O my God, that thou shouldst stoop so low as to descend to me, and to enclose thyself within me? *Is it credible then, that God should dwell with men on the earth? If heaven, and the heavens of heavens do not contain thee, how much less this house which I have built‡?* But thy goodness, O God, knows how to humble itself when it pleases thee. Thou knowest well how to conceal the splendour of thy glory, to communicate thyself more freely to us. This thou didst in thy adorable incarnation, in which thou madest thyself like to us to attract our love: and this method thou holdest on in this mystery, where thou bestowest thyself upon us for our food and nourishment, that thou mayst more closely unite thyself to us, and make us aspire to that celestial banquet, which thou hast prepared for all the blessed in heaven, whom thou perpetually replenishest with thy divine presence.

O my

* 1 Pet. i. 12. † Isa. vi. 3. ‡ 2 Chron. vi. 18.

O my God, grant me grace that I may daily more and more aſpire to this eternal banquet, that the deſire of enjoying it may make me flight all the goods and pleaſures of this mortal life, and labour continually to render myſelf worthy of it, and to arrive thereat. *Deſire of ſalvation.*

This is my reſolution, which at preſent I make before thee; I reſolve to renounce all my irregular affections, and whatever may too much incline me to the vain and deceitful goods of this life. I know they are apt to endanger the loſs of everlaſting happineſs. I will therefore withdraw my heart from them, that I may love nothing but thee alone, and place my whole truſt in thee, as *David* did. *It is good for me to ſtick cloſe to my God, to put my hope in the Lord God**. I firmly reſolve to watch over all my actions, to fly from ſin, and avoid whatſoever may diſpleaſe thee. And as the ſame *Pſalmiſt* expreſſeth himſelf, *I ſhall be ſpotleſs with him: and ſhall keep myſelf from my iniquity*†. I will labour to work out my ſalvation, by keeping thy holy commandments. This I proteſt before thee, O my God; and I hope I ſhall be faithful to thee. *I have ſworn and am determined to keep the judgments of thy juſtice*‡. *Reſolution.*

But I am not able to perform this without the aſſiſtance of thy grace, wherefore I moſt humbly demand it of thee: O God ſave me, *Lead me into the path of thy commandments, for this ſame I have deſired: incline my heart*, and make me love *thy* divine truths, and not the goods of this world§. *Divert my eyes that they may not ſee*, that is, be fixed on, *vanity: enliven* and ſtrengthen *me in thy way*, that is, in the holy path of virtue. Grant that I may find nothing amiable but thee alone: aſſiſt my weakneſs that I may be able to advance towards thee¶. *Draw me* to thee, O divine *Jeſus!* being thus attracted *we will run after thee to the odour of thy ointments*, that is, of thy divine virtues, by an holy imitation of them, and by following thee even as far as heaven, where thou liveſt and reigneſt for all eternity. *Prayer.*



* Pſalm lxxii. 28. † Pſalm xvii. 24. ‡ Pſalm cxviii. 106. § Pſalm xxxv. ¶ Cant. i. 4.

## CHAP. III.

### *Of* Charity, *the third disposition for the worthy receiving of the blessed Sacrament.*

### ARTICLE I.

*How necessary* Charity *is, to communicate well.*

*Charity is a necessary disposition for communion.*

THIS is the third disposition for a good communion, and no less necessary than the two former: yea, without it, those two great virtues would not at all conduce, or dispose the soul for the worthy receiving of *Jesus Christ*. Although your faith were as great as that of the Apostles, and your hope equalled that of the Prophets, if you have not charity, you are not in proper dispositions for entertaining him, who is charity itself, and who cannot dwell with him who has not charity.

*If I should have all faith*, says St. *Paul, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing* *. He even says: *And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing*, to make these great acts of faith and hope †. If then these two virtues without charity are useless in respect of salvation, it is certain that they are not sufficient dispositions to receive into our breast the author of salvation.

*First reason.*

The Son of God entering into us by the holy Communion, expects to find there a dwelling-place prepared and worthy of him, which cannot be except charity be there. "For faith is the foundation "of the house of God in our soul: by hope the walls are raised; "but charity is the roof and perfection of the work ‡." *Solomon*, building a temple for God, was not satisfied to lay the groundwork upon a mountain, and build it with stones of great value; but moreover he *covered* that part of the temple, where the ark of the testament was to be placed, *with most pure gold* §. The Holy Ghost teaching us by this figure, that the house of God ought to be adorned with the most refined gold of charity, without which it cannot be an habitation pleasing to him.

In

* 1 Cor. xiii. 2. † Ver. 3. ‡ St. Augustine. § 3 Kings vi. 20.

In this divine ſacrament we receive the bread of life, by which celeſtial food our ſoul is nouriſhed and preſerved in the life of grace: it muſt then find the ſoul alive, for what is dead is incapable of nouriſhment. Now the life of the ſoul is charity. *He that loveth not abideth in death**. *Second reaſon.*

This celeſtial bread is the bread of the children of God; it is made for them. It is then an horrible ſacrilege for any one to receive it who is not of that number, as we have ſaid above, Part I. Chap. III. Art. IV. Now what is it that makes men the children of God? and by what are they diſtinguiſhed from the children of the Devil? St. *Auguſtine* ſays†, that it is charity, and nothing elſe. Baptiſm, and other marks of Chriſtianity do not ſufficiently diſtinguiſh betwixt the one and the other; charity alone is the only diſtinctive ſign betwixt them. He who loves God is the child of God; he who loves him not, is the child of the Devil. *Third reaſon.*

In fine, it is a heavenly banquet, where our Lord gives himſelf for our food, and to which he invites us with a love great beyond all compare; but he invites only his friends. *Eat*, ſays he, *O friends, and drink*‡. Now he is not a friend of *Jeſus Chriſt*, who does not love him, who does not comply with his will in all things. *If you love me*, ſays he, *keep my commandments* §. *He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them: he it is that loveth me* ¶. *Fourth reaſon.*

It is his will that every one ſhould come to this banquet with the preparation it deſerves; eſpecially that we bring with us the nuptial garment. If he find here any one ſo raſh as to preſent himſelf without this ornament, he rejects him as unworthy. Now this robe is nothing elſe but that of charity, which renders our ſoul acceptable to God, and worthy to approach him. *In golden borders, clothed round about with varieties* ‖. In a word, to communicate as we ought, we muſt be in the ſtate of grace, which without charity is impoſſible; and this is the reaſon why we cannot communicate worthily without this queen of virtues. *Fifth reaſon.*



* 1 Joh. iii. 14. † Tract. 5, in Epiſt. 1 Joan. ‡ Cant. v. 1. § John xiv. 15. ¶ John xiv. 21. ‖ Pſ. xliv. 14, 15.

## ARTICLE II.

*We muſt carefully diſtinguiſh falſe Charity from true.*

NO one queſtions the foregoing truth, all agreeing, that to receive worthily there muſt of neceſſity be the love of God in our heart, ſince he has beſtowed himſelf upon us with ſuch an admirable love. But all do not agree in the nature and quality of this love, there being many who judge of it rather according to their own inclinations, than by the rules of truth.

None but a madman or a villain would refuſe to love God, whom he knows to be the author of all good, or would not at leaſt think he loves him; but there are infinite numbers of people who deceive themſelves in this their ſuppoſition, and have only a falſe and imaginary love of God, whilſt they think they truly love him.

*Several kinds of falſe charity.*

Such is their charity who ſay they love God, and yet hate their neighbour; or who will not pardon an injury, or be reconciled to their enemy; for, *If any man ſay, I love God, and hateth his brother; he is a liar* *.

Such is their charity who ſay they love God, yet retain ill-gotten goods, which they will not reſtore; who continue in an evil habit of mortal ſin, without having a firm purpoſe of amendment; and their's, who neglect to ſatisfy the obligations of their ſtate: in a word, all their's who fail in the obſervance of God's commandments in any thing whatever. This being an undoubted maxim, that the true and only mark of the love of God is to keep his commandments. *If any one love me*, ſays our Lord, *he will keep my word* †, that is, my commandments; *he that loveth me not, keepeth not my words* ‡. *He that ſaith he knoweth him*, that is, loves God; *and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him* §.

All theſe ſorts of charity are falſe and deceitful; thoſe who love God in this manner do not love him at all; and thoſe who communicate with this kind of love are unworthy communicants.

*True charity.*

The true love of God makes us obſerve his commandments in all things, makes us fearful of incurring his diſpleaſure by any mortal ſin, and makes us prefer his friendſhip before whatever is moſt dear to

* 1 Joh. iv. 20. † Joh. xiv. 23. ‡ Ibid. § 1 Joh. ii. 4.

to us, as pleasures, estate, honour, and life itself; being ready to lose all these things rather than preserve them by offending God.

Behold, *Theotime*, what the love of God is, without which it is impossible to be in the state of grace, or communicate worthily; and that you may understand it better, read what follows.

## ARTICLE III.

### *What true charity is.*

IT is a virtue infused or given by God, which makes us love him above all things, and our neighbour as ourselves. *Charity defined.*

This definition is taken from the commandment which God has given us to love him. *Charity explained.* *Thou shalt love*, says he, *the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself**. These words, *with thy whole heart*, signify what we have already said, that we must love God above all things, and that our heart ought to be wholly his; loving nothing either equally with him, or more than him, but less than him, and only in order to his service.

This greater love does not consist in having a more vehement, a more tender, and a more affective love for God than for any other thing, although this were to be wished, but in this, that we esteem God more than all the things of this world, and that in our heart and in effect we prefer his friendship before all other goods, and whatever we love: so that we resolve to abandon and lose them all, rather than be deprived of the grace of God.

This preference and this resolution are so necessarily required in the love of God, that they are the only distinguishing mark it has, and without which it cannot subsist: so that in the moment in which any one willingly and in effect breaks this resolution, he loses the love of God. However, to make this preference and resolution, we need not represent in particular all the things before which we ought to prefer the love of God; this is neither necessary nor always expedient: what is required is a general, but steady resolution never to lose the grace of God for any thing of the world, nor to do any thing whereby we may mortally offend him.

This resolution is the fruit and offspring of the virtue of charity, which is that divine quality which *is poured abroad in our hearts by*



* Luke x. 27.

*the Holy Ghoſt who is given to us* *. It continues with us as long as we hold this reſolution; but as ſoon as we come to loſe it by any either action or deſire contrary to it, we are immediately deprived of this holy charity, which is the queen and mother of all other virtues, and without which all others avail nothing to ſalvation.

I do not here examine the motives which ought to induce us to the love of God, *viz* whether it be the reward we expect from him, or the friendſhip and benevolence due to him: charity unites theſe two; and although it be not built or grounded upon the reward, yet it does not exclude it: but the ſoul which is endowed with charity, loving God for himſelf, expects at his hands the reward of that love, which is himſelf. She loves God becauſe of the recompence, yet is far from loving him merely and only for the ſake of this recompence; for ſhe would love him, although ſhe looked for nothing from him. "We never love God without a reward, "although we ought to love him without minding the reward; "for though true charity be never fruitleſs, yet it is not mercenary; ſhe ſeeks not her own intereſt. It is an affection of the "ſoul, not a contract. It neither gains, nor is gained by bargaining. It is a voluntary affection, and makes one give himſelf "freely to his God. True love is ſatisfied with itſelf, its reward "is its beloved †."

We have already ſpoken of this virtue in other places, as Vol. I. Part IV. Chap. III. and XVI and Vol. II. in the examen upon the firſt commandment: wherefore I ſhall only add here what concerns it in relation to the ſacrament of the euchariſt, and in as much as it regards holy communion.

## ARTICLE IV.

### *Of the motives of the love of God.*

"THE reaſon of loving God is God himſelf ‡; and therefore when any one aſks, why we ought to love God? one cannot anſwer better than by ſaying, becauſe he is God.

But as God contains in himſelf an infinity of perfections and qualities, which render him infinitely amiable, this general reaſon of loving God, becauſe he is God, is divided into many particular motives, which are ſo many ſeveral obligations to love that infinite goodneſs which can never be ſufficiently loved.

Thus

* Rom. v. 4. † St. Bernard de diligendo Deo. ‡ Idem, ibidem.

Thus when I consider, that God is great and perfect in himself, and that he encircles within himself all possible perfections, all power, goodness, wisdom, justice, I find reason to love him above all other things; because there is nothing among creatures, which is so amiable as he; and he deserves to be beloved, although by an impossible supposition, he should never have done us any good. *For his own perfections.*

If I descend to the benefits which he has bestowed upon us, and consider him as Creator of heaven and earth, and of all those excellent works which he has made for our sake, I find reason to love him above all things: for how can I but love so great a bounty, which has wrought such wonders for us? "Heaven and earth, and all "things in them tell me on every side to love thee *. *For his goodness to us.*

If I reflect upon myself, I acknowledge I am the work of that immense goodness, which out of nothing has made me what I am, and cannot refrain from loving him, if I love myself, and own myself for what I am, *viz.* the workmanship of God. "God de- "serves to be loved for his own sake, even by the very infidel, "who although he be ignorant of Jesus Christ, yet he knows "himself; therefore even the infidel is inexcusable, if he do not "love his Lord with all his heart, with all his soul, with all his "strength. A certain innate or natural equity, not unknown to "reason, cries out aloud to him from within, that he ought to "love him with all his power, from whom he cannot but know, "that he has received all whatsoever he has †."

If I consider our redemption, I there find an abyss of love, an inexhaustible fountain, from whence motives to love that great and singular goodness, which has delivered me from eternal ruin, continually flow. "If I owe my whole self to God for having "created me, how much more do I owe him for having redeemed "me, and in such a manner? for I was not so easily redeemed, "as I was created. At my creation it was said of me, as well as "of all other things, *He spake, and they were made* ‡. To create "me cost him but one word: but he who made me by speaking, "and that only once, when he redeemed me, spoke much, he "wrought wonders, and suffered much hardship and many indig- "nities. In the first work he gave me my self, or what I am;



* St. Aug. l. 10. Conf. c. 6. † St. Bern. l. l. de dilig. Deo. ‡ Psalm cxlviii. 5.

" in the second he gave himself, and giving himself for me, he " restored me to myself. What return shall or can I make to " God for himself? I owe myself entirely to him in acknowledg- " ment for my creation, and what remains for me to give for my " redemption? Although I could repay myself a thousand times, " what am I in comparison to my Lord*?"

## ARTICLE V.

### *Of the particular motives of the love of God, drawn from the Blessed Sacrament.*

IT should seem that love is not able to advance farther than that of our Lord has done, and that the highest pitch to which it could possibly arrive were to die for us, according to those words of our Lord: *Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends* †. But the divine love knows no bounds, it passes beyond death; and as it is ingenious and omnipotent, it finds out innumerable ways to make its greatness and excess appear.

The charity of *Jesus Christ* was not content to lay down his life for our salvation, to reconcile us to God by his death, even when we were his enemies‡, or to love us first, " He being so great, to " love so much and of his pure mercy, such and so contemptible " persons§;" that is, with such an excess of love, and such a debasement of his greatness, to love to such a degree us wretched creatures, laden with sins and all miseries, and this of his pure mercy, without any interest of his side, but merely upon the consideration of our good.

This excess of love would not satisfy his bounty; he has even found out the means of never departing from those whom he has loved so far as to die for them; he has contrived to remain with us, though absent from us; and having withdrawn from us his visible presence, he has nevertheless found out a way how we may still enjoy him. He has given us his flesh for meat, and his blood for drink; he has shut them up under the figure of bread and wine, that we might the more commodiously receive them; and, by means of this divine invention, he enters into and takes possession of us, he sanctifies our soul and body, he enlivens us with his grace, he cures our interior maladies, he strengthens our weakness; in a word, *He abideth in* us *and* we *in him*¶.

O skil-

* St. Bern. l. de dilig. Deo. † Joh. xv. 13. ‡ Rom. v. 10. § Ibid. ¶ Joh. vi. 57.

O skilful and ingenious love! O admirable invention, peculiar to God alone! Here we may affirm with truth what the prophet *Isaiah* said: *Verily thou art a hidden God, the God of Israel**.

In this sacrament of the eucharist God is truly hidden, because he has herein invented a way to conceal the grandeur of his Majesty, that so we might more easily approach him. And it is in this holy sacrament that we may say with *David*: *O how great is the multitude of thy sweetness, O Lord, which thou hast hidden for them that fear thee! Which thou hast wrought for them that hope in thee, in the sight of the sons of men†.*

What return can we make to God for so extraordinary and so incomprehensible a blessing? For if we do not know how sufficiently to acknowledge the benefit of our creation, much less are we able to make any return for that of our redemption; how then can we testify our gratitude for this third effect, and this utmost excess of the divine goodness, wherein he not only gives himself for us, but to us, that we may truly take possession of him? "What return shall I make to God in exchange for himself? "although I should give myself to him a thousand times, what "am I, when compared with my God‡?"

True it is, *Theotime*, that we cannot return to God any thing worthy of him, in acknowledgment of the rich present he has made us of himself: yet at least we may afford him our love and affection, as far as we are able, saying with St. *Bernard*: "I will "love thee, O my God, my helper, for the offering thou hast "made me of thyself, and that to the utmost of my power. It is "true, it can never be equal: yet it shall not be inferior to the "power, with which thy holy grace shall endow me§."

## ARTICLE VI.

### *Of acts of charity before Communion.*

WHEN we expect a person of great quality, we do three things. 1. We earnestly desire his coming. 2. We take all possible care to have all things in readiness for his kind reception, as lodging, conversation, banquets, and presents. 3. We go to meet him. And it is but just that you perform these things in regard of *Jesus Christ*, whom you expect.

1. Wish

* Isai. xlv. 15. † Ps. xxx. 20. ‡ St. Bern. l. de dilig. Deo. § Ibid.

1. Wish from your heart for his dear presence, making use of those words of *David: As the hart panteth after the fountains of waters, so my soul panteth after thee, O God**. O my God, my soul sighs after thee, and languishes away with desires to possess thee. Come, O my Lord, make haste, pardon me once more my sins, and make me worthy of the favour which thou art about to bestow upon me.

2. Make all things ready to receive him; and although your soul be already disposed by confession, see however, and examine again whether there remain any thing that may be displeasing in the eyes of *Jesus Christ*, some secret sin, some irregular inclinations, as a lie, an aversion against your neighbour, or any sinful or dangerous affection. Leave not the least of all these things in your heart, but root them out by contrition and a fixed and steady resolution to amend your life. Think of the conversation with which you design to entertain him, as soon as you have received him. The most acceptable is that which consists of acts of faith, hope, and charity: these are the most agreeable offering you can possibly make him. Prepare yourself to present him your heart to love him, and yourself to serve him with all fidelity.

3. Go forth to meet him, and to invite him into your house by good thoughts and holy affections, *let my beloved come into his garden*†. O Jesus, come into my soul, as into a garden, which much delights thee. Make her worthy to receive thee, vouchsafe to take away from her whatever may be offensive to thee: adorn her with the flowers which best please thee, that is, with purity and humility. Come, O Saviour of my soul; come and save me by thy grace, and deliver me from those enemies, who design my eternal ruin.

### *Of Acts of Charity after Communion.*

PErform that towards *Jesus Christ* which we are wont to do, when a person of quality, whom we have long expected is arrived. After the first meeting and salutation, we conduct him to the apartment prepared for him, and there we perform these four things.

1. We give some signal testimonies of our respect, friendship, and acknowledgment for the honour we receive by his presence. 2. We offer him the best things we have, and such as may be most pleasing to him. 3. If we have need of his assistance, we beg

* Ps. xli. 1. † Cantic. v. 1.

beg such things as we want. In fine, when he returns we give him thanks, acknowledging the honour of the visit, we renew and repeat to him our protestations of fidelity, friendship, and service. Behold how you are to behave towards *Jesus Christ*, immediately after communion.

As soon therefore as you have received the sacred host with great faith, and a profound humility, adore our Lord who is within you. Then departing modestly from the holy table, withdraw yourself into some convenient place; and employ yourself as follows.

Conduct our Lord, not into your body, since he is there already, but into the place of your soul wherein he most delights, that is, into your heart and affection; that is to say, fix your thoughts upon him, and make acts of adoration, love, and gratitude; consecrate to his divine service your soul and body, and present him your petitions.

O my God and my Saviour *Jesus Christ*, I adore thee from the bottom of my heart; I firmly believe that I now possess thy body, a living body, and therefore, by a necessary consequence, thy blood also and thy soul; as likewise thy divinity, which was always inseparably united to thy humility. I acknowledge that thou art in me all these ways. O greatness of God, is it possible that thou shouldst humble thyself so low? O goodness, how immense art thou thus to remain with us!

Thou dost not only come to us, but thou bestowest thyself upon us for food and nourishment: and to whom? to a poor and wretched servant as I am: a Lord to his slave: God to his creature: *Jesus Christ* to a sinner. Although I had nothing mean but my condition, I should be unworthy to receive thee; but I am become still more undeserving by my sins, and yet thou hast the goodness, not only to say to me as *David* said to *Miphibosheth*, *thou shalt eat bread at my table* *: but also thou thyself art my food and nourishment. O divine goodness! how have I deserved so great a favour; *who am I thy servant that thou shouldst look upon such a dog as I am?*

Ponder well upon these words, and consider what you were before by sin; less in the sight of God, than a dead dog in respect of his master: and that you are now by his grace and favour restored to the number of the children of God, seated at his table, and nourished with his body and blood. Next proceed to the acts of love and acknowledgment.

*Acts*

* 2 Kings ix. 7.

*Acts of love towards* Jesus Christ.

O My God, what return shall I make for this so signal a favour, and what shall I do to acknowledge it? Is it possible that I should not continually love thee, after this excess of love which thou hast shewn me? Thou hast loved me to that degree, as to lay down thy life for my sake, and shall not I make this return at least, as only to live for thee? Thou hast communicated thyself at present wholly to me, and shall not I from henceforth be wholly thine? O my God, permit me not to be so ungrateful and so insensible of this thy love and my own salvation. I am fully resolved by thy holy grace, that I will be faithful to thee, and never depart from thee by any disobedience to thy law. I will never forget thy bounty, nor the favour thou hast done me in admitting me to partake of thy mercy. I will love thee with all my heart. O my God, my strength, my support, my refuge, and my deliverer. Thou art my God and my all. What is there either in heaven or on earth I should love besides thee? Thou art the God of my heart, the inheritance and holy happiness I pretend to; I have made choice of thee, and nothing shall prevail on me, to make me change.

*An Offering to* Jesus Christ.

WHAT shall I give thee, O my Saviour, as an earnest of that love which I have here now engaged to thee? I have nothing worthy of thee; and if I had, I have nothing but what is thine on several accounts; but such is thy goodness, thou art willing to accept from us what is thy own already. Wherefore behold I here offer myself to thee, my body and soul, which are now sanctified by the honour of thy divine presence: I offer them both to thee, since at present thou hast chosen them to be thy temple: my body to be employed in thy service, and never more to be an instrument of sin; my soul to know thee, to love thee, and evermore to be faithful to thee. Bless O Lord, the present I here make thee: sanctify them both, since they have served thee for a temple. Permit not that my body be any more defiled with sensual delights, nor my soul by a will to commit any mortal sin. For my part I here resolve to serve thee with body and soul; I will take pains to correct their evil inclinations; I will fight against myself, renounce my wonted pleasures, my delights, my passions, my concupiscence, my anger, my pride, my ambition, my own self love, and lastly, whatever may offend thee my God.

*A Prayer*

*A prayer to* Jesus Christ.

PRESERVE in my soul, O my God, this holy resolution thou hast here given me, and grant me grace faithfully to put it in execution: I can do nothing of myself, and without thy assistance: I therefore beg it of thee with all my heart, that I may conquer all the difficulties I shall meet with in the way of my salvation. Look upon me with the eyes of mercy, have compassion on my weakness, and strengthen me daily with thy grace.

When you have finished all these acts, you may make use of the prayers in your manual after communion, or other vocal prayers, according as your devotion shall dictate to you: and I say the same also of the prayers which those books contain as a preparation to communion. But all this is to be understood, provided still that you apply your chief endeavours to the practice of the acts of the precedent virtues.

## ARTICLE VII.

*Advice concerning the foregoing Forms of Faith, Hope, and Charity.*

THERE are some directions to be observed concerning the practice, which we have given you, of these three virtues in order to communion.

The first is, that it is not necessary to employ them all every time we communicate, because they may be too long: but it is enough that we insist particularly upon the practice of some one of the three, and to direct the principal fruit of the communion to that end. Thus you may choose for one communion the practice of faith, for the next, that of hope, and charity for the third: yet never omitting some act of each of the other virtues, when one of the three is your principal exercise.

Secondly, that you may reap the benefit of any of these virtues, you must prepare yourself before-hand, by reading the forms which we have given thereof. You must read that which you intend to practise; and take notice of the acts, and endeavour to understand them well, and make them your own.

Thirdly, when the time of communion shall be at hand, you must practise these acts as you read them here. But remember that your heart go along with your words. To this end you must read them leisurely, repeat and ruminate upon them within yourself, insisting upon those which move you most. They are for the most part words taken out of holy writ, collected on purpose that you

you may learn them with more eaſe, and that they may make the deeper impreſſion.

To conclude and reap the benefit of the practice of theſe three virtues, employ ſome part of the day of your communion in pondering upon what you have practiſed in the morning; to this end read the whole chapter which concerns that virtue, which may ſerve for a ſpiritual leſſon on the day of your communion.

## ARTICLE VIII.

### *Of Prayer to the Bleſſed Virgin before and after Communion.*

I Recommend to you moſt earneſtly, dear *Theotime*, not to forget to pray to the Bleſſed Virgin before and after communion.

Before communion, that you may obtain, by her interceſſion, the grace to communicate worthily, conceiving, as ſhe did, the Son of God in your heart before you receive him into your body. And that you may be filled with thoſe holy diſpoſitions, whereby ſhe merited to receive the Son of God himſelf into her womb, particularly with thoſe of *purity* and *humility*, which were the two virtues by which ſhe attracted to her the Son of God: "She "pleaſed him by her virginity, and conceived him by her hu- "mility *."

After communion pray to her, that by her interceſſion you may obtain grace to retain ſpiritually in your ſoul her Son *Jeſus Chriſt*, whom you have corporally received, as ſhe herſelf after ſhe had conceived and brought him into the world, preſerved him always in her heart, by means of that love which kept her ſoul continually fixed upon her dearly beloved Son: a love whereby ſhe enjoyed a greater happineſs, than ſhe did by being choſen the mother of God. "The mother of God was truly happy upon "this account, that ſhe became his mother in the incarnation, "and conceived him in her body; but without a doubt ſhe was "much more happy, becauſe ſhe preſerved him perpetually in her "heart by love†."

Form in your underſtanding a right notion of this happineſs, and pray to the Bleſſed Virgin to obtain of her dear Son that he remain for ever with you.

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* St. Bernard. † Ven. Bede hom. in Lucam.

## ARTICLE IX.

*How we ought to ſpend the Day of our Communion.*

IT is an advice of very great conſequence, to ſpend all that day in piety and devotion, wherein you have performed ſo ſacred an action; and to honour that day by the exerciſe of good works, upon which God has been pleaſed to ſanctify you by his preſence. To ſpend it otherwiſe is to fail in your reſpect to *Jeſus Chriſt*; and it happens but too often, that, by this neglect of our duty we loſe the greater part of the fruit, which otherwiſe we might reap from the holy communion.

What then you are to do, *Theotime*, on that day, is frequently to call to mind, and ſeriouſly to reflect upon the honour you have received, and which it is out of your power ſufficiently to eſteem.

Secondly, not to diſtract your mind, either with vain diverſions, or with unprofitable and frivolous diſcourſe: but to be more ſerious, modeſt, and reſerved in all the actions of that day, remembering what honour has been done you, when you were choſen to be the temple of *Jeſus Chriſt*.

Thirdly, employ all that day in good works, as far as you are able: the reſt of the morning in divine ſervice, or reading ſome book of piety. After dinner in hearing the word of God, aſſiſting at even-ſong; and the remainder of the day in diſcourſe with good and virtuous perſons.

At night in your prayers be not unmindful to give God thanks for your communion, and all the favours which he has beſtowed upon you. Beſeech him moſt earneſtly that he will give you grace to benefit yourſelf thereby the next day, and the remainder of your life, and to put in execution all the reſolutions you have made upon this occaſion.

But for the better compliance with theſe holy reſolutions, remember that you renew them every day in your morning prayers, even to the day of your following communion; and at night in your examen of conſcience ſee and conſider well whether you have faithfully fulfilled them, or whether you have broken your promiſe, and in what; that ſo you may ſet yourſelf again in the right way of the ſervice of God.

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## ARTICLE X.

*Of frequent Communion.*

NOthing now remains, but to exhort you to communicate often, dear *Theotime*, and to secure the great advantages which God presents you with in this divine sacrament. It is in reality a great benefit to have communicated in the manner we have here pointed out; but if after this, one abstain a long time from it, he runs the danger of losing the fruit of his foregoing communion by relapsing into sin, and the disorders of his former life.

There is a certain proportion betwixt spiritual and corporal nourishment. This requires we should take it as often as the necessity of our body shall require: and we need it according as the natural heat consumes our substance, and whatever contributes to its support. The same must be said of spiritual food, which serves to repair the forces of the soul, continually diminished and weakened by concupiscence, and all the passions with which it is assaulted. If these forces are not frequently recruited, the life of grace is by degrees much weakened, and in the end entirely lost. Now what serves to repair them is the holy Eucharist, which renews our strength, and restores our soul to her former vigour, weakening concupiscence, diminishing our passions, preserving her from mortal, nay even from venial sins, as we have already said.

After this, is there any necessity of other motives to persuade either you or any Christian, to frequent communion? Certainly those who are willing to do what is pleasing in the sight of God, and continue in his grace, have need of none. And as I suppose you are one of that number, I exhort you by the charity of *Jesus Christ*, and by the excess of love which he shewed us, in bestowing himself upon us in this adorable mystery of our salvation, that you frequently approach to him in this divine sacrament, to the end that he may remain in you and you in him, as he himself has promised.

Consider that your soul is always sick, and that its distempers, if neglected, may bring you to eternal death. Come then to this great physician, who alone is able to cure you, and to preserve you from death, by this bread which he has given: *The bread that I will give, is my flesh for the life of the world**.

Consider his earnest desire of relieving you in all your wants, and the ardent love with which he presses you to come to him.

*Come*

* Joh. vi. 52.

*Come to me, all you that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you: and you shall find rest to your souls* *. They who are not won with this endearing invitation, shew themselves as much insensible to the love which *Jesus Christ* has testified for them, as they are enemies to their own salvation? Is it possible that you should be one of these? Look to it, for if you be, you are not of the number of the children of God: for children listen and attend to the voice of their father, readily come to him, and esteem themselves honoured by his company, and especially by being admitted to his table.

What a shame is it then for Christians so to neglect such a treasure, which is so nigh at hand! to be at the very source of divine graces, and not to benefit themselves thereby! to remain in the death of sin, when the fountain of life is at their disposal! *Why will you die, O house of Israel* †? O Christians, among whom God has chosen his habitation upon earth, why do you suffer yourselves thus to die, having the author of life so near you, who invites you to come, and threatens you if you do not accept his invitation? Crying out to you in a loud voice, *Except you eat the flesh of the son of man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you* ‡. Adding: *he that eateth me the same also shall live by me* §. After such strong assurances, what excuse can we alledge before the divine tribunal at the day of judgment for keeping ourselves at such a distance from the fountain of life, and preferring the state of death, and this because we are unwilling to partake of this living and life-giving bread?

*Frivolous excuses.*

Call to mind the feast in the parable ‖, where the master of the house shewed so much anger and indignation against those who refused to come, after they had been so solemnly invited. They excused themselves the best they could, some on account of their affairs, others their pleasures; one said, he was obliged to go to his country house; another, that he went to try the oxen he had bought; and the third, that he was taken up about his marriage; but not any of these excuses were admitted, they were all rejected as frivolous pleas, and they who made them were all judged unworthy of being ever admitted to that banquet. This is the method which God will use towards Christians who refrain from the sacraments, upon these vain pretences which they usually frame to themselves; for all their excuses will be condemned and rejected.



*Mat. xi. 28, 29. † Ezech. xxxiii. 11. ‡ Joh. vi. 54. § Joh. vi. 58. ‖ Luke xiv.

To thoſe who excuſe themſelves on account of affairs and employments of the world it will be anſwered, that there is no concern of ſuch importance as that of their ſalvation, which therefore they ought to prefer before all other things. And they will be reproached for having preferred their temporal concerns before their eternal happineſs, and made more account of this world, than of the grace of God.

To thoſe who excuſe themſelves with the indiſpoſitions of their ſoul, ſaying, that they have not that virtue which is required for frequent communion, one may reply, that their excuſe is but too true, yet it is a very bad one; for it is their duty ſo to live, that they may communicate frequently, and to uſe their utmoſt endeavours to render themſelves worthy.

Laſtly, we ſhall find that there is no other cauſe why people communicate but ſeldom, beſides their ſloth, their indevotion, and fear, leſt, if they ſhould frequent the ſacraments, they would henceforth be obliged to live holily; and in ſhort, an unwillingneſs to amend their lives, and a deſire to remain in their ſins, and to indulge their pleaſures, their covetouſneſs, ambition, and other paſſions.

Avoid this great misfortune, this fault ſo common among Chriſtians, who ſlight in this manner their ſalvation, and the great advantages which by the goodneſs and mercy of God are offered them. Learn in time to ſet a great value on them, and to avail yourſelf of them, approaching frequently to theſe divine myſteries inſtituted by God, as the means of your ſalvation.

Begin this method from your youth, and continue it thenceforward all your life, that you may perform it better and better, the oftener you approach to the holy table.

## ARTICLE X.

*When and how often we ought to communicate.*

*Communicate once in a month.*

THE time which you ought moſt commonly to obſerve in your communion, is that of every month; ſo that you ſhould not exceed that ſpace without affording this divine nouriſhment of the holy Euchariſt to your ſoul.

It is difficult to abſtain ſo long without finding the want of this help to reſiſt the temptations of your ſpiritual enemies, and to repreſs the paſſions which ſpring from your age. You have need of ſtrength, whereby you may be able to withſtand the Devil, as alſo of a good preſervative againſt yourſelf: the one and the other

you

you will find in the holy communion. Wherefore it is fit that you have recourſe to it, as the wants of your ſoul ſhall require.

Beſide, it is neceſſary that you grow up and encreaſe in the fear of God, and in all Chriſtian virtues, faith, hope, charity, humility, temperance, modeſty, and the reſt; which you can never do, if you communicate but ſeldom.

Take this then for a general rule, to communicate once a month, and oftener in either of theſe caſes: *Oftner on ſome occaſions.*

Firſt, when there happens any ſolemn feaſt, as of our Lord, or of the bleſſed Virgin, which you ſhould never let paſs without receiving the bleſſed ſacrament, as well to honour the feaſt by this ſacred action, as to make yourſelf worthy of partaking of the graces which God more liberally diſtributes, in conſideration of the united prayers of the faithful on thoſe days.

The ſecond is, when you perceive in yourſelf any conſiderable want thereof, as when you are aſſaulted with more violent, or more frequent temptations than ordinary; for then you muſt have recourſe to this remedy to ſtrengthen you, leſt you fall into mortal ſin.

And if by misfortune you are already fallen therein, for want of due precaution (which eaſily happens, not only to young people, but to many others, who are not ſenſible of the evil before it be already committed) in this caſe, *Theotime*, take care to confeſs your ſins forthwith; and as for communion, take the advice of your ghoſtly father, whether it be to receive that day, if he find you ſufficiently diſpoſed, or to defer it ſome days longer, during which time you may prepare yourſelf for it, by doing penance for your ſins, and deploring in the preſence of God the miſery which has befallen you.

This is what you are to obſerve concerning the frequency of communion, whilſt yet you are young. When you ſhall be more advanced in age, in judgment, and in the love of God, you may communicate more frequently ſtill, according to the counſel you ſhall receive in that point, ſuppoſing you have a good guide, and according to the deſire you ſhall find in yourſelf to advance in virtue, and in the ſervice of God: which deſire, however it ought to be always very vehement, ſhould daily increaſe in you. *More frequently when more advanced in age.*

But I adviſe you at all times, and eſpecially in youth, carefully

*Avoid three faults.*

to avoid three faults, too common amongſt thoſe who communicate upon ſet days. The firſt is, of communicating through cuſtom, without propoſing to themſelves an end or deſign in their communion. The ſecond is of communicating with little or no preparation, and without devotion. The third is of reaping little or no benefit, perſiſting ſtill in the ſame vitious habits of innumerable venial, and many times mortal ſins.

Theſe are three faults which prejudice frequent communion in an high degree, and which make one loſe the greateſt part of the fruit thereof, and render it oftentimes rather hurtful than profitable to us. Let it be your chief care to avoid them, and to this end remember every time you communicate, to comply with theſe three duties directly oppoſite to the former faults.

*Three duties of communicants.*

Firſt, always propoſe to yourſelf a good end, which you hope to compaſs by means of your communion; ſuch as is above-mentioned, *viz.* to pleaſe God, to advance in his grace, and to ſtrengthen yourſelf in virtue.

Secondly, Prepare yourſelf always the beſt you can, and endeavour to ſtir yourſelf up to great devotion; and to this effect take care that you put in practice the directions we have formerly given on this ſubject. See Vol. I. Part II. Chap. IX, X.

Thirdly, endeavour to amend your evil habits, and to make good uſe of the graces you received by means of this bleſſed ſacrament. It is a matter of high concern, and of which you ought to take ſpecial notice.

*To communicate ſeldom, or to no good effect, equally dangerous.*

Remember that there are two faults which you ought equally to avoid in the holy communion. The one is to communicate too ſeldom; the other is to communicate often, but to no good effect. By the firſt, one neglects and loſes the graces of God; by the ſecond, one abuſes thoſe which one has received: both which lead directly to damnation.

Fly theſe two rocks fatal to ſalvation. Communicate often with the above-mentioned diſpoſitions; and by holy communion amend your life, and advance in virtue, and the love of God. If you do this, *Theotime*, the bleſſing of God will attend your devotion, and he will daily ſhower down new graces upon your ſoul, that you may better ſerve him all the remainder of your days in this, and enjoy him in the next life for evermore. *Amen.*

IN-

# INSTRUCTIONS ON PRAYER.

## PART I.

*On prayer in general.*

THAT I may treat upon prayer in a proper manner, I ought to begin with praying: I ought to beſeech God to impart to me that light, which I much need in ſupplying you, *Theotime*, with all neceſſary inſtructions on this ſubject; and to give you grace to comprehend and follow my directions. Let us therefore jointly repeat that petition, which the diſciples of Chriſt made to their Maſter, *Lord, teach us to pray* *.

### CHAP. I.

*On the excellence of prayer.*

IT is to be hoped, *Theotime*, you ſay ſome prayers every day: but do you ſeriouſly reflect upon the excellence of the action which you perform? Three things, if conſidered, may give you an exalted notion of that holy exerciſe: the honour of converſing with God; an unlimited permiſſion to requeſt whatever favour you deſire; and a full aſſurance of obtaining it. What can the world afford that is comparable to this privilege!

*By prayer you converſe with God.*

Think, if you be able, what it is to converſe with God, with him, whoſe ſovereign majeſty filleth heaven and earth, who by one word made all creatures out of nothing, and whom the Angels never behold but ſtruck with dread and filled with admiration.



* Luke xi. i.

miration. The mere ſight of a temporal Prince is often eſteemed a happineſs; and to be indulged the honour of a converſation with a Royal perſonage is reckoned a ſingular favour. What then do you think of the honour which you enjoy, of free acceſs whenever you pleaſe to the preſence of God, and an uncontrouled liberty of addreſſing your diſcourſe to his Divine Majeſty. O *Theotime*, if on the one hand, you conſider your own empty vileneſs; and on the other, the aweful grandeur of the Almighty, you will be amazed at the exceſs of honour which is done you when you are allowed to ſpeak with God. *I will ſpeak to my Lord*, ſaid *Abraham*, *whereas I am but duſt and aſhes**. If this favourite ſervant of God looked upon himſelf not worthy of ſpeaking to his Creator; what ſhould we think of our own baſeneſs? How full of awe ſhould be that reſpect with which we approach the Omnipotent ſeated upon his throne, and attended by his whole heavenly court!

*You preſent to God any requeſt.*

But if it be a ſingular honour to be allowed to ſpeak with God when you pleaſe; what a happineſs ſhould you deem it to be perpetually empowered to preſent to him any requeſt whatſoever, provided only it be conſiſtent with what is right. A grant of this ample extent was never made by the moſt munificent Prince to his moſt cheriſhed favourite. This is the peculiar bounty of the Almighty. The infinite diſtance betwixt his greatneſs and our littleneſs, his holineſs and our ſinfulneſs, and the infinite value of that grace which we crave, ſo far from inclining him to forbid us his preſence, rather induce him to be more urgent in preſſing us to come to him, as if he feared leſt our conſciouſneſs of want of merit ſhould retard us. Hence that encouraging invitation of Chriſt: *Aſk, and it ſhall be given you* †.

*You are ſure to obtain it.*

From the words of Chriſt juſt quoted it might ſeem ſufficiently manifeſt, that this encouragement to offer to God whatever petition we deſire is accompanied with a full aſſurance of obtaining the purport of our requeſt. But becauſe a favour ſo extraordinary, by which humble prayer is enabled to withſtand or even to vanquiſh the Almighty, could not eaſily gain credit, the Holy Ghoſt has been pleaſed to afford us inconteſtable proofs of this truth.

If we open the Old Teſtament, there we find it aſſerted: *The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him; unto all that call upon him*

* Gen. xviij. 27. † Luke xi. 9.

*him in truth**. *The Lord hath heard the desire of the poor*†. There we find *Moses* full of that amazing intrepidity which emboldens him to set himself up to oppose Almighty God, though the divine arm be stretched out to destroy the people of *Israel*; and the Lord of the Universe, as if too weak to resist the efforts of his own creature, exerted only in prayer, gently expostulates with him, and meekly desires him to desist, in these words of astonishing condescension: *Let me alone, that my wrath may be kindled against them*‡. At another time we find God, as if fearing the consequence of an humble entreaty, forbidding his Prophet *Jeremy* to bind his avenging hand, or to alter his angry resolution by prayer: *Do not thou pray for this people, and do not withstand me*§. Need we any other proof of the efficacy of prayer?

You will, however, *Theotime*, be more fully convinced of the powerful effect of prayer, when you read the Gospel, and there observe what pains our Blessed Saviour seems to take, to put it beyond a doubt that no prayer we make will ever be frustrated of its aim. To this purpose he engages his word: *Ask, and you shall receive*‖. He confirms his promise with an oath in these solemn terms: *Amen, amen I say to you: if you ask the father any thing in my name he will give it you*¶. He illustrates this truth by the familiar example of a father, who never refuses bread to the entreaty of his son**; and by that of an unjust judge, who yields to the incessant solicitations of a troublesome widow, though neither the fear of God, nor any regard for man makes impression upon his heart††. Then he concludes, that if men, *being evil*, cannot refuse to prayer the concession of good gifts, much less can God, who is bounty itself, refuse any benefit, and especially *the good spirit to them that ask him*‡‡.

From these considerations proceed those high encomiums which the Holy Fathers lavish upon prayer, when, amongst many other commendations, they term it, an elevation of the soul to God, an entertainment with God, or, as S. *Bernard* expresses it, "A familiar communication of the soul with God, while she is inflamed "with love and penetrated with humility§§.



* Ps. cxliv. 18. † Ps. secund. Heb. x. 10. ‡ Exod. xxxii. 10. § Jer. vii. 16. ‖ John xvi. 24. ¶ John xvi. 23. ** Luke xi. 11. †† Luke xviii. ‡‡ Luke xi. 13. §§ S. Ber. trac. de via solit. & trac. de inter. domo.

## CHAP. II.

### *On the neceſſity of prayer.*

IF prayer be a noble exerciſe of the ſoul, it is alſo one of the cauſes, and one of the conditions of our ſalvation. This appears from the ſolicitude with which this duty is preſſed upon us in holy writ. *Let nothing hinder thee*, ſays the wiſe man, *from praying always* *. The ſame duty of praying always is inculcated by Chriſt †, and his Apoſtles ‡. St. *Paul* in his epiſtle to the *Epheſians*, ſpeaking of the means of reſiſting the enemies of our ſalvation, recommends prayer as the laſt reſource, and as a powerful auxiliary which gives vigour to all other endeavours: *Praying at all times in the ſpirit* §: that is to ſay, above all things forget not prayer, what other helps ſoever you employ.

*Prayer is neceſſary for gaining heaven.*

It is ordained by our Creator that prayer ſhould be neceſſary both for the obtaining of life everlaſting, which being a gratuitous gift of God, he has an unqueſtionable right to eſtabliſh the conditions upon which it ſhall be gained, and for the performing of thoſe good works to which eternal life is promiſed. Theſe good works are avoiding evil and doing good, the evil we muſt avoid is ſin, which is incompatible with the felicity of heaven into which *there ſhall not enter any thing defiled* ‖. The good we muſt do, is the practice of the ſeveral virtues which merit heaven. But none of theſe things can be performed without the grace of God, which is not uſually obtained but by prayer.

*Prayer is neceſſary for avoiding evil.*

In order to avoid evil we muſt engage with mighty enemies which wage a perpetual war againſt us. We muſt reſiſt the Devil, that determined adverſary of man, who ſeeks all poſſible occaſions to draw us into ſin. We muſt fight againſt the fleſh, that domeſtic foe which is confederate with Satan, and always watching to betray us into his hands. We muſt beware of the world, which ſtudies to impoſe upon us by falſe maxims, and to decoy us by ſtratagem into its ſnares. The exertions of theſe our enemies are ſo indefatigable, that we are not ſecure one moment without the ſupport of the grace of God; hence, as prayer is the uſual channel through which divine ſuccours are conveyed,

* Eccli. xviii 22. † Luke xviii. 1. ‡ 1 Pet. iv. 7. Rom. xii. 12. 1 Theſſ. v. 17. § Epheſ. vi. 18. ‖ Apoc. xxi. 27.

veyed, we are exhorted by our Redeemer to be earneſt in imploring the divine protection: *Watch ye and pray that ye enter not into temptation**.

*Prayer is neceſſary for doing good.*

Divine grace is not leſs requiſite in performing good works, than in avoiding ſin. We are not even able to entertain one good thought conducing to eternal happineſs, unleſs the grace of God enlighten our underſtanding to diſcern it, and move our will to embrace it: this is the doctrine of the Apoſtle †. It is impoſſible we ſhould believe in God, hope in him, or love him as we ought, or duly repent our ſins, without the previous grace of the Holy Ghoſt: this is a deciſion of the Church‡. But the more we need the grace of God, the more neceſſary is prayer. For though our Lord be ever ready to afford us all requiſite aſſiſtance, he generally expects we ſhould aſk for it: *Aſk, and it ſhall be given you; ſeek, and you ſhall find: knock, and it ſhall be opened to you. For every one that aſketh, receiveth: and he that ſeeketh, findeth: and to him that knocketh, it ſhall be opened* §. No promiſe is made to thoſe who neglect to comply with this injunction.

*A difficulty anſwered.*

There is however one difficulty in this matter: why ſhould God require us to ſue to him for that, which he already knows we want? Not for his own information: he knows all things. Not to render him propitious: he is goodneſs itſelf and unchangeable. Yet this difficulty St. *Auguſtine* and other Fathers of the Church have reſolved.

They anſwer, that Almighty God in obliging us to ſue for grace has had regard to his own honour, and our ſalvation. He has had regard to his own honour; for in obliging us to pray for his favours, he has given us an opportunity to recollect the need we have of them, and to acknowledge that all bleſſings, eſpecially ſuch as directly tend to our ſalvation, are his gift. He has likewiſe by that obligation brought his favours into greater eſteem; for men are but too apt to undervalue that which coſts them nothing. "What we have longed for a conſiderable time is ſweet in the "acquiſition; but what we obtain the inſtant we wiſh for ſoon "falls into diſregard ¶."

But perhaps in laying upon us the obligation of prayer our bountiful Lord has had leſs regard to his own honour, than to our ſalvation.

* Mat. xxvi. 41. † 2 Cor. iii. 5. ‡ Con. Trid. Seſſ. 6. can. 3. § Mat. vii. 7. 8. ¶ St. Aug. Ser. 5. de verbis Dom.

ſalvation. He has hereby occaſioned us to exerciſe three great virtues as often as we pray; *humility*, by confeſſing our indigences; *hope*, by truſting that his goodneſs will relieve us; and *charity*, or the love of God, for nothing conduces more effectually to kindle affection in our heart, than ample and unmerited favours, ſuch as thoſe for which in prayer we own ourſelves indebted to the divine liberality. We might add that prayer prepares us to receive more abundant graces, in as much as it enlarges our heart by deſire. St. *Auſtin* thinks this the great reaſon why the Almighty ſo earneſtly exhorts us to perſiſt in prayer; that we may thereby be diſpoſed to receive, what he is diſpoſed to grant. This learned Saint aſſerts, that "Our eternal felicity, which far ſurpaſſes what either eye hath ſeen, ear heard, or ever entered into the heart of man, will be proportionable to the ſteadineſs of our faith, the ſtrength of our hope, and the ardour of our deſire *." His aſſertion deſerves attention.

*Remark.*

## CHAP. III.

*On two kinds of prayer; mental, and vocal.*

THERE are two kinds of prayer; the one called mental, the other vocal: both which St. *Auguſtine* mentions; deſcribing the one, that prayer which the heart produces when it expreſſes interiorly its own affections; the other, that which utters in words the ſentiments of the heart †.

*Mental prayer.*

When we pray, we not only beg pardon of God for our ſins, and implore thoſe bleſſings whereof we feel the want; but adoring God whom we love with our whole heart, we humbly profeſs our dependence on him as the Creator of all things; and returning him thanks for paſt favours, we own ourſelves indebted to him for our very exiſtence, for all the endowments of our body or mind, for the remiſſion of our ſins, and for whatever virtue we poſſeſs; we alſo reproach our ingratitude in making the benefits of God an occaſion of offending him, inſtead of pouring forth our ſouls in the warmeſt teſtimonies of thankſgiving for bleſſings, which, if worth deſiring, ought ſurely to have been eſteemed worth a return of thanks, according to the advice of the Apoſtle ‡. Now which of theſe duties cannot we

* St. Aug. ep. 121. ad Probam. † St. Aug. ep. 121. ‡ 1 Theſſ. v. 18. Phil. iv. 16.

we perform interiorly in the heart, or, as St. *Paul* expreſſes it, *praying in the ſpirit* *? Indeed, mental prayer being a ſilent intercourſe of the ſoul with her God, is frequently the moſt profitable kind of prayer; in it the mind is often more attentive, and the heart more ardent in its deſires, and more urgent in its requeſts. Which made St. *Auguſtine* ſay: "The great affair of our ſalvation is advanced more by ſobs than by ſpeeches; more by tears than by words."

Yet vocal prayer, which recites with the lips certain forms of addreſs to God, ſuch as are found in the Pſalms of *David*, in the office of the Church, or in approved books compoſed to aſſiſt the faithful in praying, is very beneficial, often a great help in ſupplying us with proper thoughts when we diſcourſe with God, and frequently neceſſary to fix the attention, when perſons are not accuſtomed to pray without a book. Beſides, the body ſhould concur with the ſoul in paying homage to our maker. Hence exterior acts of *adoration* expreſſed in words and deeds, and denoting interior veneration, have been always uſed by holy perſons. Hence is derived the ſolemnity of *ſacrifice*, which is performed by offering to God the life or the very being of ſome creature which is conſumed in his honour, to ſignify his ſupreme dominion over the whole creation; which chief act of religion has been practiſed not only by the ſervants of God in all ages, but alſo by the heathen in worſhipping falſe Gods. *Vocal prayer.*

Hence too originates the external fealty of *praiſe* recommended by the royal Prophet as an offering pleaſing to God: *Offer to God the ſacrifice of praiſe; and pay thy vows to the moſt High* †. But whether you uſe vocal prayer, *Theotime*, or practiſe external acts of religion, you ſhould be convinced that your merit does not ſo much depend on the prolixity of your prayer, or the the duration of your pious exerciſe, as upon the fervour of your heart. "Let your "prayer be importune, not diffuſe ‡."

## CHAP. IV.

### *On the conditions of Prayer.*

THAT prayer may be acceptable to God it muſt be accompanied with certain conditions: the firſt of which is attention. 1. *Attention.*

Without

* Epheſ. vi. 18. † Pſalm xlix. 14. ‡ St. Aug. ep. 121.

Without attention all lip-worſhip is but the ſhadow of prayer: it is but mocking God. True prayer is, "A cry of the heart*."

But what is meant by attention in prayer? St. *Thomas* † diſtinguiſhes three kinds of attention: one, to the words; when we take care neither to ſuppreſs words, nor to clip or mumble them; but to articulate every ſentence entire: another, to the ſenſe or meaning of the words: and a third, to God whom we accoſt, and to the ſubject whereof we intend to ſpeak to him. The ſecond kind of attention not being in the power of thoſe who do not underſtand the words which they pronounce, the firſt and third may ſuffice. But "It cannot be expected God will liſten to our prayer when we do "not attend to it ourſelves ‡."

*Diſtractions in prayer.*

Yet ſomething muſt be allowed to human weakneſs. The mind of man in its preſent ſtate being ſurrounded with corporal objects, cannot eaſily raiſe itſelf to thoſe which are ſpiritual; and when it does apply its thoughts to ſpiritual things, it is ſoon called off by objects which preſent themſelves to the memory or imagination. It cannot therefore be required of man, that, while at prayer, he keep his attention perpetually fixed. When he begins to pray, let him remind himſelf of the preſence of God to whom he ſpeaks, and of the matter which he propoſes to make the ſubject of his prayer; repenting of that immoderate diſſipation to which he may have given himſelf: then let him recall his thoughts whenever he perceives them wandering, placing himſelf repeatedly in God's preſence, and he need not be apprehenſive on account of the diſtractions which trouble him; they are all involuntary, and neither offend God, nor leſſen the merit of his prayer.

2. *Devotion.*

Devotion is a condition of prayer not leſs neceſſary than attention. Every one eſteems it; though few know what it really is. True devotion is a diſpoſition of the heart which makes us perform with affection and fervour all actions that belong to the ſervice of God. It is related of the people of Iſrael, that they *offered firſt fruits to the Lord with a devout mind* §: and that when God commanded *Moſes* to build the tabernacle: *All both men and women, with devout mind offered gifts* ¶. If theſe rich offerings could not pleaſe God without

* St. Aug. in Pſalm cxviii v. 145. † 2. 2. q. 83. a. 3. ‡ St. Greg. apud. St. Thomas hic. § Exod. xxxv. 21. ¶ Ibid. v. 29.

without the zealous fervency of the devotion of the heart; what is there in prayer that could pleaſe him without devotion? What is there in prayer that could be ſo acceptable to the Deity, as to merit divine favours, unleſs the heart were dedicated to God by the ardour of devotion!

*Exterior and interior devotion.*

The devotion here ſpoken of is not confined to that ſanctified compoſure of the exterior, which lifts up the eyes, wrings the hands, bends the knees, or throws the body proſtrate upon the ground. Devotion is chiefly in the heart, and compriſes three pious acts; a *reſpect* for the Divine Majeſty, an *humble acknowledgment* of the wants of the ſoul, and an earneſt *deſire* to be aſſiſted by the goodneſs of God. Exterior devotion is often mimicked by the pious groans and holy geſticulation of the hypocrite. Yet true interior devotion does not renounce outward actions which proceed from the abundance of the heart, or which contribute to affect the ſoul; but it ſeeks retirement in the uſe of uncommon geſtures. In public it ſhuns ſingularity, which might produce vain glory, or bring devotion into diſrepute. It hates all indecent lolling, gazing or pratling; but is fond of an humble poſture, and a modeſt comportment, which ſhew the heart is full of the action which it performs.

3. *To deſire to be in the ſtate of grace.*

It cannot be doubted but mortal ſin is a great obſtacle to the effects of prayer; becauſe a perſon in the ſtate of ſuch ſin is unworthy of God's favours; and as long as he is pleaſed with his condition, and *turneth away his ears from hearing the law, his prayer ſhall be an abomination* *. But the moment he *humbleth himſelf*, and deſireth to be converted from his evil ways, his *prayer ſhall pierce the clouds* †. The publican mentioned in the Goſpel was a ſinner when he went up into the temple to pray; but he implored the divine mercy ſtruck with ſorrow to the heart; and his prayer was ſo agreeable to God, that *he went down to his houſe juſtified* ‡. He is the model and the encouragement of repenting ſinners.

4. *To pray in the name of Chriſt.*

We need not wonder that to pray ſhould be an effectual method to draw down heavenly benedictions, when we reflect that every favour we obtain by prayer is granted not ſo much to us, as to Chriſt, nor ſo much for our ſake, as for the ſake of Chriſt: our Bleſſed Lord himſelf having directed that all our requeſts ſhould

* Prov. xxviii. 9. † Eccli. xxxv. 21. ‡ Luke xviii.

ſhould be preſented in his name: *If you aſk the Father any thing in my name, he will give it you* *. But thoſe people are far from praying in the name of Chriſt, who petition for any thing detrimental to their ſalvation: ſuch perſons abuſe their Saviour, inſtead of making him their Mediator. Nor do thoſe Chriſtians anſwer the intention of their Redeemer's injunction to pray in his name, who are ever anxious in ſoliciting for temporal bleſſings, but cold and indifferent when ſalvation is their concern. If they make vows, or pray with more than ordinary fervour, you may be almoſt ſure they wiſh to be delivered from ſome temporal calamity, or deſire ſome worldly advantage for themſelves or their children. A vow to give an alms, or to perform ſome pilgrimage in order to acquire chaſtity, humility, or any other virtue, or to eſcape ſome dangerous occaſion of ſin, is rare indeed: although Chriſt gave his life to reſcue us from ſin, and to purchaſe for our ſouls the ornaments of virtue.

*How to pray for temporal bleſſings.*

We are not however forbidden to pray for temporal things, as we are not forbidden to deſire them†. But our principal reaſon for deſiring them ſhould be, that we may make them conducive to the glory of God, and our own eternal happineſs‡. How criminal would it be to make ſin ſubſervient to their attainment! We ſhould not even aſk for ſuch deluſive poſſeſſions, but with a degree of apprehenſion leſt they ſhould turn to our ſpiritual ruin. "When you pray for the things of this world, "leave the granting or the refuſing of your requeſt to God, the "phyſician of your ſoul, who knows beſt how to diſtinguiſh the "medicine from the poiſon§." In ſhort, *Theotimo*, in this regard ſtick cloſe to the rule of Chriſt: *Seek ye firſt the kingdom of God and his juſtice, and all theſe* temporal *things ſhall be added unto you:* as far as they may be ſubordinate to your eternal welfare.

5. *Perſeverance.*

If perſeverance gives an additional value to all good actions, this is as far more particularly true of prayer, as prayer is a duty of greater importance. On this account our Lord in exhorting us to pray makes uſe of the terms *ſeeking* and *knocking* ¶, becauſe when a perſon ſeeks what he has loſt, or knocks at a door which remains ſhut, he commonly perſiſts for ſome time. On this account alſo he

* John xvi. 23. † St. Tho. 2. 2. q. 84. a. 6. ‡ Ibid. § St. Aug. Ser. 53. de verb. Dom. ¶ Mat. vii. 7.

he reminds us that a perſon may ſometimes wreſt from his friend by the importunity of perſeverance favours not granted to the allurement of affection*. The Almighty, though determined to make us partake of his bleſſings in due time, does not always impart the tokens of his kindneſs as ſoon as we deſire: perhaps he gives us patience under afflictions, while he differs removing them; thus he acted with his Apoſtle; beſtowing on him that ſhield of fortifying grace, which enabled him to ſtand victorious amidſt the aſſaults of Satan, inſtead of withdrawing him from many haraſſing temptations†. He acts like a good phyſician, who rather preſcribes "according to the nature of the diſeaſe, than "according to the inclination of the patient‡."

## CHAP. V.

*On joining almſdeeds and faſting with prayer.*

ALmſdeeds and faſting though diſtinct virtues from prayer, are however its proper attendants, and may therefore claim a place next to its conditions.

*Faſting.*

Faſting and other corporal auſterities help much to the exterminating of ſin, which is the chief obſtacle to the efficacy of prayer. The ſoul preſſingly invited to lay her wants before her God, is too feeble to riſe to heaven whilſt weighed down by the encumbrance of earthly attachments, or whilſt ſhe indulges criminal inclinations which glue the heart to creatures: but faſting and other macerations of the fleſh, mingling a wholeſome bitterneſs with the objects of concupiſcence, contribute to wean and to diſengage our ſenſual affections; until our mental powers recovering their liberty take their flight upwards to tender their vows and ſupplications to their Creator. That the chaſtiſement of the body by mortification is a ſuitable and a very ſerviceable ſupply to prayer, might be ſhewn from many concurrent inſtances recorded in holy Writ§.

*Almſdeeds.*

The maxims of ſacred Writers, the documents of the Holy Fathers, and the practice of the Church in recommending faſting as a proper attendant on prayer to facilitate its aſcent to heaven, join in the ſame advice the exerciſe of almſdeeds, that our humble prayer

* Luke xi. † 2 Cor. xii. ‡ St. Aug. in Pſalm xii. § 2 Eſd. i. 4. Judith iv. 8. Dan. ix. 3. Act. xiii. 3, &c.

prayer may obtain a favourable audience from the Deity. Charitable offices attract the divine regard, and provide for the pious author the friendly support of heaven in time of need. *Shut up alms in the heart of the poor, and it shall obtain help for thee against all evil*. Do not forget to do good and to impart: for by such sacrifices God's favour is obtained†.* That memorable protection, which one of the highest Angels, commissioned by the great Sovereign of the Universe, afforded with assiduous attention to young *Toby* in distress, was the effect of prayer though not without her sister-attendants, fasting and almsdeeds; of prayer, which in such company is preferable to treasures of gold‡. Wherefore, *Theotime*, "If you be "desirous that your prayer should fly up with rapidity to the "throne of God, mount it upon the wings of almsdeeds and "fasting§." See Vol. I. Part. IV. Chap. XXII.

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## CHAP. VI.

### *On the time and place for prayer.*

*The time for prayer.*

PRAYER being a duty of the utmost importance, it is natural to enquire when and where we ought to pray? Christ himself appoints the time, telling us; *We ought always to pray*¶. What! Should we always have a prayer-book in hand? Should we be always upon our knees? Or, at least, should our mind be perpetually without interruption elevated to God? Certain bigoted Zealots who anciently maintained this extravagant explanation of the words of our Saviour, were censured by the Fathers of the Church as Heretics, under the denomination of *Euchites*, or, persons ever praying. And surely with great reason; for though *David* said: *I will bless the Lord at all times, his praise shall be always in my mouth*‖: It cannot be supposed that neither his lips nor mind were ever otherwise employed. He praised God very frequently: and so ought we to pray. He never let pass any long time without praising God: such should be our practice with regard to prayer. They who neglect the duty of prayer though but for one whole week, must have very confined notions of their dependance upon the Almighty, and the multiplicity of their own exigencies.

* Eccli. xxix. 15. † Heb. xiii. 16. ‡ Tob. xii. 8. § St. Aug. Ser. 60. de tem. ¶ Luke xviii. 1. ‖ Psalm xxxiii. 2.

exigencies. It is to be feared that such sloth puts a grievous affront upon their Creator, their Preserver, their constant and disinterested Benefactor. At least, if such wilful omission be continued for one month, who will pretend to exculpate it from the guilt of mortal sin? What then shall we say of those sluggards, who let entire years slip away, whilst they doze on, locked up in habitual indolence!

O my dear *Theotime*, have a horrour of such conduct. Make it your daily practice to pray to your Creator upon your bended knees morning and evening: and to hear mass devoutly as often as you can. See Vol. I. Part II. Chap. XI, XII, XIII. Make it also your custom to begin your principal actions in the day with raising up your heart to God in order to beg his blessing upon what you do. If you have the misfortune to fall into sin; immediately return to God by contrition. If you apprehend being seduced by sin; pray that you may not be tempted above your strength. Pray when you overcome temptation, returning thanks to your Deliverer. Pray if in danger of death: but forget not, as too many do, to offer your first prayer on that occasion for the pardon of your sins, and for an eternal union with God, whom you desire to love with your whole heart. In short, perform every action with such piety, and such a total oblation of your heart to God, that the most trivial may be ennobled by that royal virtue charity, which residing in your breast actuates every motion of your soul. Thus will you pray without ceasing, as much as the Holy Ghost requires.

*The place for prayer.*

Our faith teaches that God is every where: and therefore we may every where have recourse to him by prayer. Yet some places are more favourable to that attention, devotion, and respect, which an action so sacred and so tremendous demands. If our prayer be private, and unconnected with that of others, our Saviour advises retirement into our closet *. But when we act in concert with others in public prayer, he sends us to some place set apart for divine worship †; and honours such place with the distinguished appellations of *house of God* ‡, and *house of prayer* §.

*Public prayer.*

The prayer we make in public at stated times has certainly many advantages, if performed in a becoming manner. On those occasions



* Mat. vi. 7. † Luke xviii. 12. ‡ Mat. xii. 4. § Mat. xxi. 13.

our ſouls are moved to greater devotion by obſerving the religious behaviour of our brethren; and our own piety may help to their edification: our feeble endeavours are ſupported by the firmer virtue of our neighbours; and our ſuffrages combined with theirs offer a kind of holy violence to heaven. See Vol. I. Part II. Chap. XXII.

*Private prayer.* But if private devotions were entirely omitted, our ſouls would be often apt to languiſh for want of that ſpiritual nouriſhment they receive from prayer; for we have not always an opportunity of aſſembling in public worſhip. During intervals between the times of the public ſervice of the Church, our cloſet is a good aſylum into which we may retreat from the diſtractions of the world, and ſhut out with the crowd, and the buſtle of temporal affairs, many incitements to hypocriſy and vanity which might moleſt our ſweet intercourſe with God.

Wherefore, *Theotime*, frequent religious aſſemblies, where God is duly worſhiped, taking care to bring thither proper diſpoſitions; accuſtom yourſelf alſo to converſe with God religiouſly in private. The Church ſervice more nearly reſembles the concordant voice of the heavenly choirs; but private devotion is a permanent ſource of help and conſolation.

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## CHAP. VII.

### *On the Invocation of Saints.*

*Lawful to invoke the Saints.* IT is lawful to deſire the Saints in heaven to pray for us. This has always been the belief of the Catholic Church: whilſt they who have combated this doctrine, *have trembled for fear where there was no fear* *. They have apprehended, that by invoking the Saints we raiſe them to a level with Chriſt, our Mediator. Whereas we loudly profeſs that the diſtance between them is infinite, the ſame as between the creature and the Creator: and that whatever bleſſings we expect through the interceſſion of the Saints muſt be derived to us from the merits of Jeſus. It cannot however be denied, but holy perſons now living upon earth may in ſome meaſure become our mediators, or may interpoſe with Almighty God in our favour, making interceſſion for us; elſe why did St. *Paul* deſire the faithful to

* Pſalm xiii. 5.

to pray for him*. And why did he pray for the faithful†? Although Chriſt be a Mediator of a very different nature from St. *Paul*, from the faithful upon earth, and from the Saints in heaven; becauſe *Jeſus Chriſt* alone is our Redeemer: Yet why ſhould we be eternally obliged to wrangle about words? Why ſhould terms, by a miſrepreſentation of their meaning, make a perpetual breach of faith amongſt us?

*Profitable to invoke the Saints.*

If it be not leſs lawful to ſupplicate in our behalf the ſuffrages of the Saints now reigning in a ſtate of bliſs and immortality, than to ſolicit this ſame charity from our friends in their preſent mortal ſtate, compaſſed with infirmity like ourſelves; why ſhould it be leſs profitable? Have they now leſs charitable ſolicitude for our good, becauſe ſecure of their own reward in a kingdom wherein *charity never falleth away*‡, but is improved and perfected? Have they now leſs knowledge of our indigencies, when they diſcern ſo diſtinctly many occurrences here below, that they take a joyful part in what is tranſacted in the converſion of every repenting ſinner§? Yet every one thinks it a benefit to partake in the prayers of his living friends. The very abettors of the reformation ſtill retain the practice of requeſting each others prayers, and eſteem it a ſalutary expedient. What excuſe then, *Theotime*, can you plead, if you neglect ſo great a help to your ſalvation? You have the daily example of the Catholic Church for imploring the interceſſion of the Saints: you have daily feſtivals on which that ſacred community honours the memory of ſome Saint; and on which, while the faithful give ſupreme worſhip to the Deity, they pay that deference to the Saint, who is the friend of God, as to requeſt the favour of his prayers and patronage. "The Saints are our ſentinels, whoſe protection is as ſafe, as it is eminent¶."

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## CHAP. VIII.

### *On the Lord's prayer.*

*Excellence of the Lord's prayer.*

INSTRUCTIONS on prayer would be incomplete without a word upon the Lord's prayer; the excellence of which cannot be queſtioned if we reflect that its Author was Wiſdom incarnate. In fact, the



* Col. iv. 3. † Col. i. 3. ‡ 1 Cor. xiii. 8. § Luke xv. 7. ¶ St. Amb. in SS Gerv. & Protas.

form and ſubject of this prayer are worthy of its Author. In words ſo few, that the meaneſt capacity might learn them, it compriſes wiſdom ſo elevate, that the brighteſt genius might admire it: and every part is arranged in the moſt beautiful order. In ſeven petitions we are authorized by Chriſt himſelf to ſue to God for whatever is great in heaven, or ineſtimable upon earth: we firſt beg the glory of God may be propagated; and then, according to the order of things, that the ſalvation of men may be accompliſhed. Thus the brevity of this prayer does not leſſen its dignity: "Though conciſe, it contains the ſubſtance of the whole "Goſpel *."

*Its preface.*

Theſe firſt words: *Our Father, who art in heaven*, are full of weighty meaning which is not diſcovered without attention. They conciliate to us the benevolence of the Almighty, ſince thereby we profeſs him to be a bountiful Father, and the potent Lord of heaven; characters which are ever dear to him, and which induce him to cheriſh thoſe that own them. They rouſe our confidence in him; as they expreſs his goodneſs and power, the grounds of our hope. "What will he not grant to us his children, having al-"ready granted us the right of children †?" They kindle our affection for him: for what is more amiable than a parent? Theſe diſpoſitions of confidence and affection in us, and partiality in our favour in Almighty God, are wonderfully adapted to the entrance upon prayer.

Several other pious hints are crowded in that preface, which are alſo well accommodated to that place. "If God be our Fa-"ther, how anxious ought we to be to ſerve him in every thing ‡." "If God be our Father, we ſhould ſerve him, not out of fear, "but affection §." "If our Father be in heaven, our whole lives "ought to aſpire after a heavenly inheritance ¶." Should theſe precious truths occur to our attention when we begin this prayer, we hardly can entertain thoughts relative to this earth while we repeat it.

But how is God our *Father?* Firſt, by creating us to his image. *Is not he thy Father, that has created thee* ‖? Secondly, and more properly, by adopting us for his children by means of ſanctifying grace, whereby we are *made conformable to the image of his*

* Tert. L. de or Dom. † St. Aug. Ser. 183 de temp. ‡ St. Aug. Ser. de temp. § Idem ibid. ¶ St. Aug. hom. 4ta: inter 50. ‖ Deut. xxxii. 6.

*his ſon* *; and acquire a right of an eternal inheritance, as *ſons of God, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Chriſt* †. In either of theſe acceptations of the word *Father*, we may addreſs the Lord's prayer to the three Perſons of the Bleſſed Trinity in quality of one God, ſince the works of creation and ſanctification, by which we are made the children of God, are the works of power and goodneſs the common attributes of the Godhead, not peculiar to any one of the divine Perſons. But if this prayer be ever addreſſed to the firſt Perſon, the reaſon hereof is, becauſe the common name *Father* is alſo the proper name of that perſon, and therefore not ſeldom aſcribed to him; as we are alſo accuſtomed to aſcribe power to the Father, wiſdom to the Son, and goodneſs to the Holy Ghoſt.

Why do we ſay he is *in heaven*, who filleth all things with his preſence? Becauſe there he chiefly diſplays the ſplendour of his glory.

Why do we call him *our Father*, ſpeaking in the name of more perſons than one? Becauſe as we are all brethren, and are all engaged in one common cauſe, the work of the ſalvation of our ſouls, we ſhould all feel and be intereſted as much for others as for ourſelves. "The Emperor and the mendicant, the maſter and "the ſervant are brethren, having all the ſame Father ‡."

*Hallowed be thy name.* This is the firſt of thoſe three petitions which relate to the glory of God. "What can be more juſt, than "that he who has been permitted to call God his Father, ſhould "inſtantly requeſt the exaltation of God's glory, poſtponing to "that noble conſideration every regard for private advantage §?" We deſire that the name of God (that is, in effect, God himſelf), may be ſanctified. Not that any increaſe of ſanctity can poſſibly accrue to God, who is already infinitely Holy: but the knowledge of this ſanctity may be farther extended; and this ſanctity, where known, may be more duly reſpected. The deſign therefore of this petition is, to beſeech God that his own admirable perfections may be more univerſally known, more ardently loved, and more reſpectfully worſhiped by all his creatures. 1. *Petition.*

*Thy kingdom come.* Next to deſiring that the name of God may be exalted, the true 2. *Petition.*



* Rom. viii. 29. † Rom. viii. 16, 17. ‡ St. Aug. hom. 4. inter 50. § St. Chry. hom. 20. in Mat.

children of our heavenly Father ſhould wiſh that his kingdom may be enlarged to the utmoſt bounds of the creation. This always was, and always will be, the immenſe extent of the dominion of his power and providence *. But the ſpiritual dominion of God is at preſent circumſcribed: it is but begun by his grace upon earth, where *his kingdom is within us* †; it is but partly completed by that glory into which the juſt enter immediately after death: and it will not be fully accompliſhed till after the general reſurrection, when the enemies of God, the Devil, ſin, and death, ſhall be ſubdued; *that God may be all in all* ‡. This perfect accompliſhment of the reign of God, and the glory which will thence reſult to our Creator, we have chiefly, even more than our own happineſs, in view in this petition.

*Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*

3. *Petition.* As the perfect accompliſhment of the reign of God, the object of the foregoing petition, is not to be expected in this world, we are taught in the mean time to entreat that his glory be at leaſt ſo far promoted upon earth, that all human beings may ſubmit to his orders, acquieſce to his appointments, and fulfil his deſires. In heaven only do we find ſuch beautiful ſubordination to the divine will, that the pleaſure of the Almighty regulates every thought, and every motion. To this ſweet conformity of the Bleſſed ſpirits to the divine pleaſure we look up, when we utter the preſent petition; this we recollect with joy, and this we propoſe to univerſal notice as the model of that obedience we wiſh to be eſtabliſhed upon earth.

But did we ſincerely deſire that which our lips pronounce in theſe three petitions, we ſhould turn our firſt care to the reformation of our own lives. Can we heartily wiſh that God may be honoured; while we wilfully diſhonour him by our conduct? that his ſpiritual dominion be accompliſhed; while we obſtinately revolt from his allegiance? or, that his will and pleaſure be fulfilled; while we thwart his deſires, murmur at his appointments, and trample upon his ſacred ordinances? May not the Almighty juſtly expoſtulate with us in theſe ſevere terms: *Out of thy own mouth I judge thee, thou wicked ſervant* §: unleſs we make our actions correſpond with our prayers? It is true ſuch a change of heart muſt be the work of the moſt High; nothing leſs than the grace of God is able

* Pſalm cxliv. 13. † Luke xvii. 21. ‡ 1 Cor. xv. 28. § Luke xix. 22.

able to subdue our stubborn and rebellious tempers. Hence each of these petitions implies a request for that supernatural assistance which may enable us to give glory to God by our deportment.

*Give us this day our daily bread.* Having already implored what may conduce to the glory of God; we beg, in the subsequent part of this prayer, for what may contribute to our salvation. What had only been implied in the preceding petitions, and could only by inference appear to be included in them, a solicitation for the grace of God, is now positively expressed; the grace of God is that spiritual daily bread we here crave: though our corporal sustenance be also another object of this petition *. 4. *Petition.*

The rich are to ask for corporal sustenance, as well as the poor; because the rich as well as the poor depend on God. Yet all are to desire only a moderate competency; and are therefore only allowed to ask for the bread of the day, *our daily bread.* All are to request only such food or raiment as is the gift of God; and therefore nothing prepared by sin; for, "Whatever is prepared "by sin is a gift of the Devil †." In short, all are to make this petition for corporal supplies in behalf of others, as well as of themselves; and therefore all should communicate their portion with the poor ‡.

Though we ought to restrain our desires when we sue for what relates to the body; yet when we crave what may benefit the soul, when we implore the gifts of faith, hope, and charity; the spiritual sustenance of the word of God, or of the grace of God; or what comprehends a treasure of all spiritual succours, the life-giving food of the holy Eucharist; we are not to curb, or to contract our wishes; but daily to redouble our importunity for the daily support of our spiritual life: *To every one that hath shall be given, and he shall abound* §, in proportion as he enlarges his soul by desire.

*Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.* The grace of God, the spiritual life of the soul, being any day liable to be forfeited, either immediately by one mortal sin, or successively in consequence of several venial transgressions, which incessantly weakening the supernatural vigour of the soul prepare it for a sudden spiritual death, we are therefore furnished by our Lord with another petition as a help to 5*th Petition.*



* St. Aug. Ser. 9. de diversis. † St. Chry. hom. 14. op. imp. in Mat. ‡ St. Chry. Ib. § Mat. xxv. 29.

recover that ſpiritual life, when loſt. To this end we muſt humbly implore the pardon of our ſins, acknowledging our guilt, with regret for our offences, and a purpoſe of amendment. To crave pardon for our ſins without theſe penitential diſpoſitions, is to inſult the goodneſs of the Almighty. We muſt own our ſin to be *a treſpaſs*, that is, an injury which we have done to God, or a debt of juſtice which we have contracted; that we may not preſume to look for mercy, until we reſolve to make what compenſation ſhall be required for the injury, which we have committed.

It may appear extraordinary that Chriſt has enjoined us to proteſt we forgive our enemies, at the very time we ſupplicate the forgiveneſs of our own offences. But ſuch an injunction is both juſt and wiſe. Juſt, for if God our common Father forgive us, ſurely juſtice requires that we forgive our brethren. Wiſe, becauſe no other argument preſſes this duty of pardoning our enemies more urgently upon us. See Vol. I. Part IV. Chap. XVI.

6. *Petition.* *Lead us not into temptation.* In the foregoing petition, we deplored our paſt ſins; in this, we take our precautions againſt future offences, by profeſſing our good reſolutions to ſhun ſin and its occaſions; and by begging the grace of perſeverance.

But why do we entreat that God will not *lead us into temptation?* Not becauſe God is the author of ſin; it would be blaſphemy to aſſert it. God is not a tempter of evils: *he tempteth no man**. God only ſometimes permits temptation for particular reaſons. Neither do we preſent this petition becauſe we deſire not to be tempted: That would be deſiring a particular favour which is ſeldom granted to any one. Beſides, temptation is often beneficial to us. See Vol. I. Part III. Chap. IX. Art. II. All that we deſire when we petition not to be led into temptation is, that God will either ward off extraordinary temptations, or make us equal to the combat in them: and that in ordinary trials, he will enable us to remain firm in the cauſe of virtue.

7. *Petition.* *Deliver us from evil.* After having requeſted to be preſerved from the evil of ſin, we crown all our ſupplications by ſubjoining one general entreaty, to be delivered from all evils whatſoever; paſt, preſent, or to come: and eſpecially from the Devil, that malignant ſpirit, who is the contriver of all miſchief†. Hence, "When a Chriſtian

* James i. 13. † S. Cyp. L. de or. Dom.

" tian is under affliction, he ſhould ſupply his ſobs and tears, he " ſhould begin and end his prayer with this petition.*"

## CHAP. IX.

### *On the Angelical Salutation.*

AFTER reciting the Lord's prayer, the faithful are generally accuſtomed, from primitive uſage, in order more eaſily to obtain what they have petitioned, to pronounce that congratulatory addreſs, with which the Angel *Gabriel* approached the Bleſſed Virgin when he announced to her the happy tidings of the Incarnation of the eternal Word for our Redemption; together with another ſhort addreſs, wherewith the ſame holy Virgin was ſaluted by her kinſwoman, St. *Elizabeth*, the mother of St. *John the Baptiſt;* making that combined ſalutation the language of their own hearts; and concluding it with a ſhort requeſt which the Catholic Church has annexed. If this ſalutation be examined, and its meaning candidly diſcuſſed, there is no doubt but it will appear to be both rational and profitable.

*Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: Bleſſed art thou among women, and bleſſed is the fruit of thy womb.* Theſe inſpired words, which expreſs two extraordinary prerogatives of the Bleſſed Virgin *Mary*, her ſupereminent ſanctity, and her ſupereminent dignity, lay the foundation of that diſtinguiſhed devotion, which the Catholic Church has always profeſſed to this cheriſhed favourite of Heaven. *The congratulatory part.*

After the firſt greeting word, *Hail*, denoting reſpect and joy for her happineſs, *Mary* is declared by the celeſtial delegate, *full of grace*. This plenitude of grace imports thoſe ſingular gifts, and eminent virtues Theological and moral, which were infuſed into the ſoul of this Virgin Queen, the firſt moment of her conception, proportionable to that ſublime ſtation of mother of God, to which ſhe was elected; which gifts and virtues never ceaſed to riſe in value and perfection to the laſt moment of her life.

He adds: *The Lord is with thee.* The Almighty is not ſatisfied with ornamenting thy ſoul with the moſt precious decorations of grace, which ever embelliſhed a pure creature; he takes an intimate complacency in thy celeſtial beauty, and unites himſelf wholly to thee,

* S. Aug. ep. 121.

thee, whilſt thou art reciprocally abſorbed in him. For the ſoul of *Mary* was not only full of accumulated graces, but alſo repleniſhed with her God, before the Angel announced the conception of Chriſt in her womb.

The deputy of Heaven then pronounces *Mary, Bleſſed among women.* The holy mother of the Precurſor of Chriſt repeats the very ſame acclamation of applauſe. The former, raviſhed with the contemplation of *Mary*'s tranſcendent merits, which had rendered her chaſte bowels the choice receptacle wherein the Son of God would become incarnate, gives vent to that exuberant eulogy which was to flow in from all nations upon her head, becauſe ſhe was to be the channel through which all benedictions would be derived from Chriſt upon all nations. The latter views her already overſhadowed by the divine ſpirit, poſſeſſing in her womb the height of bleſſings, as God *bleſſed for ever**; as man, richly ſtored with bleſſings ſuitable to a *beloved ſon, in whom* the Father is *well-pleaſed*†, and through whom all mankind, even the holy Virgin herſelf, are *bleſſed with all ſpiritual bleſſings*‡; and in a tranſport of exultation, having proclaimed her couſin, *Bleſſed among women*, ſhe immediately proceeds: *And bleſſed is the fruit of thy womb.*

Thus an Angel, and a Saint; an Angel purpoſely deputed from heaven to wait upon the *Virgin Mary*, and a Saint purpoſely inſpired to ſound her praiſe; both loudly publiſh, both announce to the whole world, that *Mary* has been ſingled out by the Almighty, to be ennobled with grace and dignity above the whole race of mankind. Now can any Chriſtian queſtion whether it be rational to honour her, whom God himſelf vouchſafes to honour with ſuch unparalelled tokens of eſteem? or whether it be profitable to make our court to a ſervant of the Almighty, firſt both in favour and in power, nay, cloſely allied in blood to the Son of God? "The ſon will not fail to liſten to the mother, nor the "Father to the Son§."

*The ſupplicatory part.*

Rejoicing therefore at the mention of the Incarnation of the Son of God, the fountain of mercy, grace, and ſalvation; and at the remembrance of thoſe endowments and privileges of the Bleſſed Virgin above rehearſed, and of her preſent prerogative of an exaltation in glory proportionate to her grace and dignity, on

* Rom. ix. 5. † Mat. xix. 5. ‡ Epheſ. i. 3. § S. Ber. ſer. de nativ. Virg.

on which we ground a firm confidence in the ſupport of her patronage, we proceed with the whole body of the faithful to ſolicit the interceſſion of the Queen of heaven in our behalf, uſing that form of ſupplication, which the Catholic Church has taught us: *Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us ſinners now and at the hour of our death.*

*Mary*, the name of the Virgin, added to the inſpired words of the Angel in the beginning of this ſalutation, and here again repeated by the Church, reminding us in one word of the prerogatives of her, whom we addreſs, awakens that truſt we repoſe in her prayers: as *Jeſus*, ſignifying Saviour, the name of her Son, added to the words of St. *Elizabeth*, is to every Chriſtian a moſt dear memorial of our Redemption through Chriſt.

When we entitle her, *Mother of God*, we at once profeſs her heavenly intereſt, and make known our right to her maternal protection; ſince *Jeſus*, the child of her bowels, though true God, yet being alſo true man, *is not aſhamed to call us brethren**.

We ſtyle ourſelves *ſinners*, which title is our moſt juſt due, and has this peculiar advantage, that *Mary* is the Advocate of ſuch, when they cry for mercy repenting of their iniquities. She remembers that for ſinners her dear Son ſhed his blood.

But though we avow our conſtant want of her aid, this aſſiſtance we chiefly implore for the *hour of our death*; for that dreadful hour, when we ſhall be leaſt able to help ourſelves, and when our enemies will redouble their exertions.

Wherefore, O Holy Mother of God, refuge of ſinners, mother of pity and comfort, forſake us not, we beſeech thee, in any period of our lives, but eſpecially in thoſe laſt critical moments, upon the event of which depends our eternity. Intercede for us with thy Son, *Jeſus Chriſt*, that he judge us not according to the rigour of his juſtice; but with that mercy which he purchaſed for us through the merits of his death, the only hope of our ſalvation.

On Devotion to the Bleſſed Virgin, See more Vol. I. Part II. Chap. XIX.

ON

* Heb. ii. 11.

ON

# MEDITATION,

OR

# MENTAL PRAYER.

## PART II.

ALTHOUGH what has been already ſaid concerning prayer be applicable, in a great meaſure, to mental as well as vocal prayer, yet the exerciſe of meditation is ſo important and advantageous to all who deſire to advance in piety, that it deſerves to be more fully and more particularly explained.

### ARTICLE I.

*What is Meditation?*

IT is not what the generality of men imagine, who conceive that meditation is a high ſpeculation of ſublime things, that has no other end than to acquire an elevated knowledge which others have not; in this they are much deceived. Meditation does not conſiſt in elevated thoughts, but in ſuch as are good and profitable; nor only in pious thoughts, but in holy affections which ariſe from thence, as the hatred of ſin, the love of God, fear of his judgments, and in the reſolutions which are made in conſequence of theſe thoughts and affections.

So that to meditate, is to apply our mind attentively to the truths of ſalvation, to ſtir up ourſelves to love them, and to form good reſolutions. Meditation is a ſerious and frequent reflection, made in the preſence of God and by the aſſiſtance of his grace upon the truths of ſalvation, in order to know them perfectly, to love them, and to put them in practice. Obſerve well this definition, and weigh attentively each word, becauſe there is not one without its ſenſe and ſignification.

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## ARTICLE II.

*Without meditating it is hard to secure our salvation.*

THIS truth follows from the foregoing definition; for if meditation be nothing else but a frequent and serious reflection upon the truths of salvation, in order to know them, to love them, and to practise them, it is certain that it is also difficult to secure our salvation without meditating, as it is hard to practise the truths of salvation without loving them, to love them without knowing them, or to know them without thinking seriously and frequently on them (which is what we call meditation); and without often imploring the divine grace to known them, to love them, and to practise them, which is obtained principally by prayer. Hence the scripture attributes the frequent perdition of men and the general depravity of morals to the want of reflection. *With desolation is all the land made desolate: because there is none that considereth in the heart* *.

## ARTICLE III.

*Meditation is not an invention of man, but of God.*

THEY who neglect meditation, imagine that it is an indifferent practice of devotion, only invented by men; but they are grosly deceived, because God is the first and principal author of it.

As soon as he had given the law to his people, he caused the continual meditating on it to be strongly recommended to them. *These things which I command thee this day shall be in thy heart, and thou shalt tell them to thy children, and thou shalt meditate upon them sitting in thy house, and walking on thy journey, sleeping and rising. And thou shalt bind them as a sign on thy hand, and they shall be and shall move between thy eyes* †. And a little after: *Lay up these my words in your hearts and minds, and hang them for a sign on your hands, and place them between your eyes. Teach your children that they meditate on them* ‡.

To enforce this truth more powerfully, he at the same time ordains, that all living creatures which do not ruminate, that is, which chew not the cud, should be reputed unclean, and not be offered to him in sacrifice §.

For this reason also *David* begins his Psalms with the praise of meditation, saying, The just shall always have *his will in the law of the Lord, and on his law he shall meditate day and night* ‖. He adds, that this exercise of meditation will make the just resemble a fair tree

* Jer. xii. 11. † Deut. vi. 7, 8. ‡ Deut. xi. 18. 19. § Levit. xi. ‖ Ps. i. 2.

tree planted by the water-side, which will bear fruit in its season: because as the water moistening the root of the tree, makes it fertile and abounding in fruit; so meditation upon holy things, filling the heart with good thoughts and pious affections, renders it rich in virtue and good works.

## ARTICLE IV.

*Meditation is not so difficult as many imagine.*

IS it not a strange thing, that men should account that hard, yea even impossible, which is performed daily in regard to every other concern, except that of salvation? What merchant is there, who does not often and seriously think on traffick? He who has a suit at law, does he not daily revolve in his mind the means to gain it, and that not lightly and hastily, but seriously, with attention, with affection, putting in execution all the means he can devise? This is properly meditation.

Do you not yourself, *Theotime*, who are as yet perhaps in your studies, meditate when you are at your book, composing any thing, or studying a question in philosophy, or any other science? You apply your mind to comprehend it, to remember, and reap profit from what you learn: all this is nothing else but meditating. Why then cannot you do that for your eternal salvation, which you perform for a temporal science?

I say more: Why can you not perform that for your salvation, which you do for your diversion, on which you think so often with so much application and pleasure, that frequenly you have no other thoughts but those, and they wholly take up your attention? Why do you meditate so easily upon your pleasures, and cannot meditate on your salvation? Why, in fine, can you do less for virtue than the impious do for vice and wickedness? When they have an ill design to put in execution, they perpetually think on it, they take no greater pleasure than in seeking and finding the means to effect it. This is what the scripture calls, to meditate iniquity *. Why cannot you meditate upon virtue, and perform that for it which others do for vice, and which you yourself perhaps have done? Say not then any more, that meditation is too hard. How shameful is it that Christians should so eagerly pursue their pleasures, yet be so supinely negligent in the affair of salvation!

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* Psalm xxxv. 5.

## ARTICLE V.

*Meditation may be rendered easy.*

NOTWITHSTANDING the difficulties which may be apprehended in this pious exercise, there are many means to make it easy.

The first and most efficacious is a desire of salvation, and a persuasion of the necessity of securing it. He who loves his salvation will frequently and readily think on it, seek with much care the means to obtain it, and make them easy and familiar. Nothing is difficult to him who loves. Among these means meditation and prayer deserve the first place.

Next to them are three others which will facilitate this exercise, *viz.* method, practice, and the assistance of divine grace.

*Three means to facilitate meditation.*

You must first learn a method as an introduction to that exercise you are unacquainted with, and which teaches how you are to behave therein.

Secondly, you must put it in practice, there being nothing which more facilitates an action than the frequent exercise thereof; exercise making you overcome in all things the greatest difficulties, and rendering that easy which before appeared impracticable.

Lastly, and above all, you must be assisted therein by the grace of God, who is the father of lights, and author of all pious affections. Upon this you must rely in this exercise, more than upon all human industry; and for this effect you must in your meditation beg it earnestly of Almighty God.

## ARTICLE VI.

*Young persons are capable of Meditation, and have need of it.*

YOUTH is capable of meditation, because there is nothing impossible to the grace of God, who can do all things; and God, who is pleased with young persons, is never wanting to communicate himself to them, when they seek him in sincerity of heart.

Besides, young minds not being as yet encumbered with the care of worldly affairs, nor prevented by violent passions, nor engaged in so many vices as in a more advanced age, are capable of applying themselves to the thoughts of pious things, and more

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apt to receive the light God communicates in this holy exercise, and the good motions which his grace inspires therein.

*The natural levity of Youth makes meditation necessary for them.*

I said moreover, that young people have need of meditating, for this reason, which seems to be convincing; because the lightness of mind natural to their age, hinders them ordinarily from applying themselves so much as they ought to the thoughts of their salvation: they easily apprehend what is taught them, though it soon escapes their memory for want of sufficient reflection. This is what hinders them from advancing in virtue; they have therefore great need of some means which may keep their mind attentive, and accustom them to weigh things with reflection: now a little exercise in meditation is of wonderful service for this purpose.

The same lightness of mind hinders their employing with advantage the most necessary means of salvation, and particularly three, that is, prayer, the word of God, and pious books.

They pray without attention and affection; they recite their prayers without thinking on what they say; they speak to God with their lips, but not with their heart; their tongue talks, but their heart is silent. And yet it is the heart alone which prays and obtains; it is that alone to whose voice and language Almighty God gives ear. Now this prayer of the heart is learnt in the exercise of meditation.

The same is to be said of the word of God; they often hear it with a wandering and distracted mind; or, if they give attention to it, they make no reflection on the truths they have learnt, which is the cause why they so soon slip out of their memory, and they lose all the fruit of them. The like befals them in reading pious books, to which they apply themselves with difficulty, and is to them an irksome task; hence they reap no spiritual profit. This is owing to their lightness of mind, which cannot apply itself to serious and profitable thoughts, unless accustomed and brought to it betimes. Now this is performed by the exercise of meditation, which accustoms them to raise their mind to God, to fix their thoughts upon an object of piety, to form holy affections therein, and make suitable resolutions.

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## ARTICLE VII.

*A Confirmation of the former Truths out of the ſacred Scripture.*

IF young perſons were not capable of meditating, and if they ſtood not in need of it, would the ſcripture exhort them ſo frequently, as it does in the book of *Proverbs* and elſewhere, to ſo holy an exerciſe? *My Son*, ſays the wiſe man, *if thou wilt receive my words, and wilt hide my commandments with thee, that thy ear may hearken to wiſdom: incline thy heart to know prudence. For if thou ſhalt call for wiſdom, and incline thy heart to prudence: if thou ſhalt ſeek her as money, and ſhalt dig for her as for a treaſure:* that is, employing the ſame diligence, and as much affection: *then ſhalt thou underſtand the fear of the Lord, and ſhalt find the knowledge of God**. Obſerve, *Theotime*, this compariſon of the care young people ought to bring to the ſearch of wiſdom, with that which is employed in ſeeking money, and diſcovering a hidden treaſure; and remember the earneſtneſs with which you ſometimes ſearched after the means of getting it. How often have you meditated upon it, and frequently without effect? Why will you do leſs for your eternal ſalvation, on which you can never think without ſome advantage?

In the third Chapter, he exhorts young perſons to think often on the means of their ſalvation, which he comprehends under the names of *Mercy* and *Truth*: he would have them always before their eyes, and written in their hearts. What is this but to meditate? In another chapter he ſays, *My Son, hearken to my words, and incline thy ear to my ſayings. Let them not depart from thy eyes, keep them in the midſt of thy heart: for they are life to thoſe that find them*†.

And in another; *Son, preſerve the precepts of your father, and neglect not the admonitions of your mother.*

*Let thy thoughts be upon the precepts of God, and meditate continually on his commandments: and he will give thee a heart, and the deſire of wiſdom ſhall be given to thee*‡

## ARTICLE VIII.

*On the great Benefit of Meditation.*

THE great and general benefit we gather from this holy exerciſe is, that we acquire by it a ſolid knowledge of the truths of ſalvation, learn to love them, and put them in practice. Theſe are the three effects of meditation, which cannot be ſufficiently eſteemed, becauſe they comprehend all that is neceſſary for ſalvation.



* Prov. ii. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. † Prov. iv. 20, 21, 22. ‡ Eccli. vi. 37.

Beſides thoſe effects of meditation there are two others, which deſerve a particular conſideration, becauſe they are the foundation of the reſt: *viz.* Meditation teaches us to ſpeak to God, and to hear God when he does us the favour to ſpeak to us. We ſpeak to God when we pray, and when we beg of him thoſe things we ſtand in need of; God ſpeaks to us when he interiorly inſpires us, enlightening our underſtanding by good thoughts, exciting our will by good motions, and animating us to put them in execution. Upon theſe two actions, ſpeaking to God with our heart, and hearkening to him when he ſpeaks to us interiorly, depend our ſalvation, that is, the beginning, progreſs, and perfecting of our ſanctification.

It is for this reaſon that the Fathers have recommended them to us with ſo much care. "One while ſpeak to God, (ſays St. "*Jerome*) another while give ear to what God ſpeaks to you." In ſpeaking to God, we beſeech him that he will come to us by his grace; in hearkening to him, we open our heart for him to enter there. In ſpeaking to him, we crave his light and grace; in hearkening to him, we receive them, and encloſe them in our heart to preſerve and practiſe them.

What honour, *Theotime*, and happineſs is this, to be able to ſpeak to God freely and familiarly, and that he ſhould vouchſafe to ſpeak to us, and inſpire us with the knowledge of his holy will! a happineſs which men know ſo little how to value, that the greateſt part even know not how to uſe it, although on it their eternal ſalvation depends. God is always ready to hearken to us, and we ſpeak not to him: he ſpeaks to us, and we know not what it is to hearken to him. What blindneſs is greater than this, to neglect thus ſo honourable, ſo advantageous, and ſo neceſſary a favour! If the kings of the earth ſhould give ſo free an acceſs to their perſons, for all who might deſire the honour of ſpeaking to them, they muſt be overwhelmed with the multitude of thoſe who would approach them. God communicates himſelf with unſpeakable bounty, yet is unregarded; few being willing to approach him, or deſirous of improving the opportunities he affords us.

Young perſons eſpecially profit the leaſt by theſe celeſtial favours; they underſtand not what it is either to ſpeak to God from the bottom of their heart, or to hearken when he ſpeaks interiorly to them, as he frequently does by his holy inſpirations; which is the cauſe why they neglect them, and loſe the fruit of them.

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Young *Samuel* being aſleep, heard a voice calling him by his name; he thought it had been the high prieſt *Heli*'s voice; he haſtily roſe, and aſked him what he wanted. *Heli* ſent him back, ſaying he had not called. The youth having gone three times in this manner, the ſame voice ſtill awaking him, *Heli* ſaid to him, *Son, I did not call thee,* but without doubt it is God who ſpeaks to thee: *Go, and ſleep: and if he ſhall call thee any more, thou ſhalt ſay: ſpeak Lord, for thy ſervant heareth. Samuel* returns, and the ſame voice having awaked him again, he anſwered as he was ordered, *ſpeak, Lord, for thy ſervant heareth* *; and the Lord then informed *Samuel* of the heavy judgments, which were ſoon to fall upon the high prieſt and his family, in puniſhment of ſins, that were too enormous to be expiated by the ſacrifices they offered.

Do you ſee, *Theotime,* that God ſpeaks to this young man? but he hears not, becauſe, as the ſcripture takes notice, he was not then accuſtomed to that language; but when he had been well inſtructed, he knew the voice of God, and he learned to hearken to it, and to improve himſelf infinitely in that divine ſchool.

Thus it frequently happens, that God ſpeaks to you interiorly by ſo many good motions with which he inſpires you, and you let them ſlip, becauſe you conceive not that they come from God, and that it is he who ſpeaks to you; this is the reaſon why you loſe ſo many of them, and reap no advantage by them, becauſe as yet you have not learned to hearken to the voice of God, and anſwer him in a proper manner. Now it is this which we learn by the practice of prayer and meditation.

## ARTICLE IX.

### *The Method of Meditation.*

AFTER ſhowing that you are capable of meditation, dear *Theotime,* and having convinced you of its uſe; it is now time to ſhew you how you muſt perform this holy exerciſe.

To make you more eaſily comprehend this method, I ſhall here take notice of four things.

The firſt regards the end of meditation. We meditate in order to advance in virtue, which is done by flying vice and purſuing virtue. The end therefore of meditation, is to learn to avoid evil and practiſe virtue. This conſtitutes the difference between meditation



* 1 Kings iii.

ditation and ſtudy of holy things; for we ſtudy to become knowing, and we meditate to make ourſelves good and virtuous.

The ſecond truth is, that to work out our ſalvation, and acquire virtue, three things are neceſſary; to know it, to love, and to practiſe it.

The ſole knowledge does not ſuffice, except we be inclined with an affection to the good we know; and the love of good ſerves for nothing, unleſs we proceed to the execution. This is another difference between meditation and ſtudy; for ſtudy contents itſelf with the knowledge of holy things, but meditation proceeds to the love and practice of virtue, as its principal end.

The third truth is, that we cannot of ourſelves acquire any of theſe three things; that is, neither good thoughts for ſalvation, nor pious affections, nor any good reſolutions, except we be inſpired by the grace of God. It is a truth which our Lord has taught us, when he ſaid *Without me you can do nothing**; and his Apoſtle after him, when he affirmed, *Not that we are ſufficient to think any thing of ourſelves, as of ourſelves, but our ſufficiency is from God*†. And in another place, *It is God who worketh in you both to will and to accompliſh, according to* his *good will*‡.

The fourth is, that although we cannot of ourſelves produce any good thought, affection, or reſolution for ſalvation without the grace of God; yet God requires, and will have our co-operation, to give us them, to augment them, to fortify them, and to make us put them in execution. For this reaſon he admoniſhes us to *aſk*, to *ſeek*, to *knock* at the door§.

This co-operation on our part conſiſts in two actions. 1. In imploring of God with humility and perſeverance the grace of good thoughts, pious affections, and holy reſolutions for our ſalvation. 2. To apply our minds to conſider attentively the truths of ſalvation, to draw from thence by the grace of God, ſuitable thoughts, affections, and reſolutions. This is what God would ſignify unto us, when he admoniſhed us to aſk, to meditate, to preſerve in our heart the truths of ſalvation. See Art. VII.

Theſe four maxims being thus ſettled, it is eaſy to make you underſtand the method of meditation, the knowledge whereof depends upon the underſtanding of three things which follow from thoſe maxims. 1. To know well the end for which we muſt meditate. 2. To comprehend the acts which muſt be practiſed for that end.

3. To

* Joh. xv. 5. † 2 Cor. iii. 5. ‡ Phil. ii. 13. § Mat. vii. 7.

3. To know the means which ought to be employed to perform well and profitably these acts.

The end of meditation is the sanctification of our soul, by avoiding sin, by advancing in the love of God, and by the practice of Christian virtues. This is the only thing, which ought to be proposed and sought for in this holy exercise.

The acts for arriving at this end are three, which we have spoken of, good thoughts, pious affections, and firm and solid resolutions to practise them.

The means to perform well these actions are prayer, to implore them of God, and the application of our mind to consider the truths which may move us to the love of God, and to the practice of virtue.

From the knowledge of these three things you may easily gather the order and method which is to be observed in meditation, comprehending three parts.

*First part of meditation, preparation.*

The first serves for preparation, and consists, 1. In representing to yourself the end for which you meditate, your advancement in virtue. 2. In placing yourself in the presence of God, and begging of him that you may draw from the subject you are going to meditate on, some pious thoughts, affections, and resolutions for salvation. But this prayer must be made from the bottom of your heart, desiring ardently to obtain what you ask.

*Second part: considerations, affections & resolutions.*

The second is meditation itself, which consists in three acts, of which we have frequently spoken, good thoughts, pious affections, and holy resolutions, drawn from the subject on which you meditate. The subject therefore to be meditated on, must be read and looked over before-hand; and after having made your prayer to God, the mind must be applied to consider attentively the sentiments you found expressed on the subject, or others with which God shall inspire you, to draw from thence convenient affections, and resolutions to be put in practice. You must perform these three acts in the presence of God; consider, that from him all good thoughts come, beg them therefore of him very often, and beseech him to speak to your heart. *Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth* *. *I will hear what the Lord God will speak in me* †.



* 1 Kings iii. 10. † Psalm lxxxiv 9.

In this exercise is practised that holy conversation by which we speak to God, and hearken to him in our hearts. We speak to him in praying to him, and revolving in his presence the subject on which we meditate. We hearken to him by expecting and receiving his holy inspirations, and entertaining them in our hearts, in order to put them in practice. But this conference of speaking to God, and hearkening to him in our heart, must be performed in repose and silence, as the prophet says, that is, with a quiet and attentive mind, that is, desirous of advancing in virtue.

*The last part: thanksgiving and petition.*

The third part is the conclusion, consisting of an act of thanksgiving and invocation. We acknowledge in the sight of God, that all good thoughts come from him, and that we are unable to reduce them to practice but by his grace. Thus we conclude by these two acts; we give him most humble thanks for those pious sentiments he has bestowed upon us, and beseech him that he will give us the grace to execute the good purposes we have formed.

Thus, *Theotime*, if you consider well the method of meditation, you will find that it consists of two things, prayer and contemplation: this is all which is performed in that holy exercise. It is therefore sometimes called *Meditation*, sometimes *Mental Prayer*. It is upon these two actions that our salvation and sanctification depend. We must meditate, to fill our mind with the knowledge of pious things; but we must pray to be enlightened by God in this knowledge, and that the light we receive therein may inflame us with the love of God. We ought therefore to say often with good King *Ezechias*, *I will cry like a young swallow, I will meditate like a dove**.

In fine, *Theotime*, we interiorly perform in this exercise, the same which the Prophet *Elias* did in a visible sacrifice which he offered to God; he prepared the victim and wood to burn it, and afterwards he set himself to prayer, to demand of God that he would be pleased to send fire from heaven, to burn that holocaust. Fire in effect descended, and consumed the whole sacrifice. Thus in this holy exercise of prayer, we prepare our heart to sacrifice it to God, we fill it with the knowledge of pious things, which are apt to inflame it with the love of God; but the celestial fire must descend upon it; that is, God must inflame it with his grace, and enkindle in it the fire of his love, that fire which he himself came to bring into the world, and which he earnestly desires should inflame all our hearts.

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* Isaiah xxxviii. 14.

## ARTICLE X.

### *Subjects proper for Meditation.*

AFTER we have ſpoken of the method of meditation, we muſt now ſpeak of the ſubjects on which you may meditate. We have already ſaid, that the effect of meditation is to know and love the truths neceſſary to ſalvation, in order to put them in practice. Theſe truths are to furniſh the ſubjects for meditation. We muſt contemplate them in order to know them, that knowing them we may love them, and advance in the practice of Chriſtian virtues.

1. We may meditate on the greatneſs and perfections of God, as, his power, wiſdom, goodneſs, juſtice, immenſity, and eternity; and from thence draw ſuch affections as we ſhall ſpecify hereafter.

2. The favours of God towards men; as creation, preſervation, redemption, vocation to Chriſtianity, the grace of juſtification, the particular benefits we find we have received from him.

3. The nativity, the life, the actions, the miracles, the paſſion, the death, the reſurrection, the aſcenſion of our Saviour *Jeſus Chriſt*, with all his divine words, are excellent and copious ſubjects of meditation.

4. The four laſt things of man; that is, his death, judgment, heaven, hell.

5. Sin in general.

6. Sins or vices in particular; as pride, impurity, intemperance, anger, covetouſneſs, envy, and others.

7. The Chriſtian virtues oppoſite to theſe vices; the love of God, the love of our neighbour, humility, chaſtity, meekneſs, patience, and others.

In fine, we may meditate upon faith, upon the articles of the creed, upon hope, and upon every petition of the Lord's Prayer, upon charity, and at the ſame time upon the commandments of God, all which have relation to charity.

*Manner of drawing affections from theſe ſubjects.*

In the firſt ſubjects, which are the perfections of God, we meditate upon their greatneſs, which may be learnt by books which treat of them; and we draw from thence ſuitable affections, as admiration, reſpect, ſubmiſſion, fear, hope, love.

In the benefits of God, we consider their greatness by the excellence of the thing which is given, by the greatness of him who gives it, and bestows favours on us out of his pure goodness, without having any need of us: by the meanness of him who receives the benefits, that is, of ourselves; from whence we examine the good or ill use we have made of them, the ingratitude with which we have received them, the good use we are bound to make of them for the future. From these considerations, what confusion, sorrow, repentance of what is past, and good resolutions for the time to come, must arise?

In the life and actions of our Lord, we consider the circumstances which render them admirable, the virtues he practised, his charity, humility, patience, wisdom. From whence we draw powerful motives of love, acknowledgment, and imitation of that divine master, whose example confirmed his doctrine.

In the four last things, by looking on them attentively, and as near at hand, we learn to know them, to fear them, and to prepare ourselves for them in time by a holy life. This is a very profitable and efficacious meditation, when it is often performed, and with a serious application. *Remember*, says the wise man, *thy last end, and thou shalt never sin* *.

As to sin in general, there are two important considerations, which comprehend all the rest, to be reflected on. The first is, the injury sin offers to God; the second is, the prejudice and hurt it brings to the soul of him who commits it.

The greatness and enormity of the injury sin offers to God, may be gathered from the infinite majesty of him who is offended, and the baseness and unworthiness of him who offends, who is a wretched creature rebelling against his creator; from the enormous ingratitude he is guilty of against his benefactor; from the hatred God bears to sin; from the horrid punishments he inflicted for its sake upon Angels in heaven, upon men on earth, and still heaps upon the damned in hell, and will heap for all eternity; in a word, from the atonement he exacted from his own Son, who alone was able to satisfy the divine justice for the infinite injury sin had done to God. None but God himself, cloathed in our nature, was capable of repairing the injury, by making a sacrifice equal to all our crimes.

The damage sin brings to the soul consists in this, that it miserably robs her of the grace of God, it deprives her of the right she

* Eccli. vii. 40.

ſhe had to paradiſe; it makes her a ſlave of the Devil, and ſubject to eternal damnation.

All theſe things ſeriouſly conſidered, excite in the ſoul a hatred and deteſtation of ſin, a ſorrow and regret for having committed it, an ardent will to do penance for it, and a conſtant reſolution for the future to fly from that monſter, and, by ſerving God faithfully, to avoid that greateſt of all misfortunes.

As to vices, we ponder the reaſons and motives for avoiding them, which are many and moſt effectual; we endeavour to prevail on the mind to fly from them entirely, and to confirm the reſolution of ſhunning them; from whence we meditate on the means to put them in practice.

As for virtues, we examine the motives which render them amiable, we ſtir up ourſelves to love and embrace them, we ſeek the means to acquire them, foreſee the obſtacles which may occur, the occaſions we ſhall have of practiſing them, and ſo of other ſubjects.

## ARTICLE XI.

### *Other eaſy and profitable Subjects of Meditation.*

YOU will find all the former ſubjects in diverſe books of meditation, which were made expreſsly for that intent; but to facilitate yet more the uſe of this holy exerciſe, there is a way which ſeems to me beſt accommodated to that purpoſe, and which may be very beneficial.

It is to take a book of devotion, and to make uſe of each chapter for the matter of one or more meditations. You may profitably employ in this, *the imitation of Chriſt*; *the ſinners guide* and *memorial of a chriſtian life*; *the introduction of a devout life*, and many other good books. *How to meditate on a book of devotion.*

You may make uſe of this book of *the inſtruction of youth*, and eaſily gather from thence much profit. There is ſcarce any chapter which contains not the acts of meditation, that is, conſiderations upon the ſubject, and afterwards affections and reſolutions drawn from thence; or at leaſt it is eaſy to draw them from the conſiderations which are there treated.

In order to this, when you take a chapter to meditate on, read it firſt with attention, make choice of the principal conſiderations you will meditate on, and afterwards having placed yourſelf in the preſence

preſence of God, and begged of him the light of his grace, revolve in your mind theſe conſiderations, read them, and weigh them attentively; then draw from thence affections agreeable to the matter, and form neceſſary reſolutions; in fine, having well digeſted thoſe affections and reſolutions in your ſoul, and being ſufficiently confirmed in them, beg of God the grace to retain and practiſe them. This is a manner of meditation which ſeems eaſy, and which may be very profitable.

To facilitate this yet more, I will ſet down ſome examples.

*Meditation exemplified from this book.*

If you deſire to meditate on the firſt chapter of this book, which is, of the end for which man is created; read attentively the whole chapter, you will find in it three reflections upon man, or upon yourſelf, what you are, who made you what you are, and for what end he made you. You will there learn, that this end is nothing leſs than God himſelf, who would give himſelf to you to be poſſeſſed: and this not for a ſhort time, but for all eternity. You will ſee there, how great this end is, how amiable, and how ardently you ought to deſire it. Theſe conſiderations will ſtir you up to acknowledge on the one ſide, the immenſe goodneſs of God towards you; and on the other, the ſtrange blindneſs of men, and your own alſo, who think ſo little on ſo noble and bleſſed an end, and put yourſelf often in danger of loſing it without recovery. You will afterwards find reflections to make on yourſelf, as well for what is paſt as for the future, and the reſolutions you ought to make upon ſo important a ſubject.

In the ſecond chapter, which treats of our vocation to Chriſtianity, you will find how much this vaſt benefit of God obliges you to ſerve him. 1. By the greatneſs of this grace, upon which you will obſerve three reflections, which will furniſh you wherewith to make one or many very profitable meditations: 2. By the great obligation of Chriſtianity, which being well conſidered, will effectually excite you to comply with it as you ought.

Continuing thus through every chapter of the firſt part, you will find in them wherewith to entertain your mind profitably in the preſence of God, and to ſtir yourſelf up to ſerve him faithfully, and to form ſtrenuous reſolutions.

In the ſecond part you will take notice of the means which are neceſſary for you to attain virtue. There is none of them but will furniſh you with matter whereon to meditate, and raiſe in you powerful

powerful conſiderations to perſuade you to love them, and put them in practice. Meditate on them in this ſpirit, that is, with a view to bring yourſelf to the practice of the means, and dwell on this ſubject until ſuch time as you find in yourſelf the effect of this perſuaſion.

The third part treats of the obſtacles to ſalvation, that is, of vices which you ought to avoid. In each of them you will find, firſt, the motives which oblige you to fly from them, and conſequently the means you muſt uſe for that end. Read both of them attentively upon each obſtacle, the firſt, to inſtruct you and convince your mind, the ſecond, to put them in practice. Meditate on them in the preſence of God, with deſign to advantage yourſelf by them. Obſerve therein the order we have given, and your endeavours will be crowned with ſucceſs.

You will find the ſame order in the fourth part, which treats of virtues neceſſary for young people. The motives are there mentioned, and afterwards the means to acquire them. If you read them with ever ſo little attention, you will find that there is no ſubject or matter of meditation more eaſy, as it is one of the moſt uſeful and neceſſary.

The laſt part, which treats of the choice of a ſtate of life, will furniſh matter whereon to meditate, when you are on the point of that deliberation. You will there find the importance of the choice, the faults you muſt avoid therein, the means you muſt employ, diverſe conſiderations upon each ſtate, and other things of conſequence. All this will afford matter of meditation, both profitable and neceſſary.

In the ſecond volume, you may, in like manner, meditate on *Penance*, the *Holy Communion*, and *Prayer*.

## ARTICLE XII.

### *The Practice of Meditation.*

TO reduce into practice all that we have ſaid of meditation, ſee here what you muſt do. Firſt, as the morning is the moſt proper time for exerciſes of the mind, chooſe that time for meditating in, following the advice of the wiſe man, who ſays: The juſt man *will give his heart to reſort early to the Lord, that made him, and he will pray in the ſight of the moſt high**. Many other paſſages of ſcripture recommend morning prayer.

Read

* Eccli. xxxix. 6.

Read over night the ſubject you deſign to meditate on. The next morning after you have adored almighty God, and offered to him your uſual prayers, read again the ſame matter. Afterwards caſting yourſelf on your knees in the preſence of God, beg of him the grace to perform well this meditation, and to learn therein, and keep in mind ſome important truths for your ſalvation.

Preſent yourſelf to him as a blind man, who deſires to have his ſight reſtored. *Lord that I may ſee**. Grant, O Lord, that I may ſee thy holy truths. *O my God enlighten my darkneſs*†. Clear, O God, the darkneſs of my ſoul. *Open thou my eyes; and I will conſider the wonderous things of thy law*‡. Open my interior eyes, that I may attentively conſider the wonders that are included in thy holy law. Or as a poor man, who demands of God a morſel of bread for the nouriſhment of his ſoul. *Give us this day our daily bread*§. Give me, O God, by thy grace, a little of that celeſtial bread which thou diſtributeſt to thy children. *Look thou upon me, and have mercy on me; for I am alone and poor*‖. Caſt thy eyes upon me, and have mercy on my miſery, becauſe I am a poor forſaken man, incapable of having of myſelf any good thought, except it come from thy grace. Or as a ſick man, who ſeeks remedies for his ſoul. *Have mercy on me, O Lord*, my ſoul is *grievouſly troubled by a Devil*¶. Have pity, O God, on my ſoul, which is perſecuted by the enemies of her ſalvation. Make uſe of ſome of theſe, or ſuch like prayers.

Afterwards apply your mind to conſider the ſubject you are to meditate on; chooſe two or three of thoſe conſiderations which you find in your book, fix your thought upon each, one after another, to weigh them, to convince yourſelf of them, and to keep them in your mind.

*Employ yourſelf chiefly in exciting good affections and reſolutions.*

But here, endeavour above all to excite your heart and affection, to love, to embrace, and to practiſe the truths you meditate on; for this is the fruit and end of meditation. We meditate not only to underſtand what is good, but to love it, and put it in execution; we ſeek not after ſcience, but virtue.

For this reaſon you muſt pauſe longer upon the affections and reſolutions than upon the conſiderations; you muſt extend them, entertain them, and reliſh them at leiſure. For example, it does not

* Luke xviii. 41. † Pſ. xvii. 29. ‡ Pſ. cxviii. 18. § Luke xi. 3. ‖ Pſ. xxiv. 16. ¶ Mat. xv. 22.

not ſuffice to conſider in meditation how amiable God is, to repreſent the reaſons for it, as his goodneſs, his perfections, his benefits; but after having made theſe conſiderations, you muſt deſcend to the affections ariſing from thence, to love him actually, and ſay from your heart, It is true, O God, that thou art infinitely amiable, and that there are infinite reaſons for loving thee, why ſhould I not then embrace them? Why ſhall I be ſo obdurate, ſo ungrateful, ſuch an enemy to myſelf as not to love thee? O God, how wretched is he who loves thee not! And how miſerable was I when I loved thee not, and inſtead of it was wedded to my paſſions and pleaſures! I have loved thee too late, O infinite goodneſs! I have loved thee too late! But now I will love thee entirely; nothing ſhall ſeparate me from thy love, from thy ſervice, from thy obedience.

It is chiefly in theſe affections, that God ſpeaks to the heart by the good purpoſes he inſpires it with: it is there, finding the ſoul in a holy ſolitude, and thinking on nothing but him, he is pleaſed to ſpeak to her interiorly, and repleniſh her with his love. *I will lead her*, ſays he, *into the wilderneſs; and I will ſpeak to her heart* *. There *it is good*, as the Prophet ſays, *to wait with ſilence for the ſalvation of God* †; and to ſay to him with young *Samuel*, *Speak, Lord, for thy ſervant heareth* ‡. Let not men now talk to me, let not books inſtruct me at this time; but thou, O Lord, do me the favour to ſpeak interiorly to me, and touch my heart, and fill it with thy love. See the *Imitation of* Chriſt §.

Continue a while in this ſtate, and in theſe pious affections which God ſhall beſtow upon you, ſtirring them up, and entertaining them the beſt you can. Diverſify them as the different ſubjects require. Applying them one while to the hatred of ſin, if the ſubject be ſin in general, or any particular vice; to the fear of God and his judgments; another while to a deſire to ſerve God, to become virtuous, to fly the occaſions of ſin, and ſtrongly reſiſt temptations; but moſt frequently to the love of God, to an affection for Chriſtian virtues, humility, chaſtity, temperance, and other pious and wholſome affections, as the matter of your meditation ſhall direct.

But chiefly, forget not to come to good reſolutions; for it would be offering a great injury to God, to have received from him good motions, and not to put them in execution. Wherefore you muſt always conclude your meditation with firm reſolutions to practiſe what

* Oſee ii. 14. † Lam. iii. 26. ‡ 1 Kings iii. 10. § Lib. 3. cap. 2.

what God has inſpired in prayer. But this reſolution muſt be ſtrong and efficacious, let it therefore be followed by its effect; and that it may be ſuch, read and practiſe the third and fourth advice, which you will find in the following article.

Finiſh your prayer, by giving thanks to God for the good thoughts and motions he has beſtowed upon you, humbly begging of him the grace to put them in practice; foreſee the occaſions you may have to practiſe them, that you may be mindful of them.

You may perform this exerciſe in the ſpace of half an hour or ſo; that time is not too long for an action of ſuch importance, where you treat with God concerning your ſalvation, and wherein God does you the honour to hearken to you, and communicate himſelf to you with ſo much bounty.

As for the days of meditation, it would be a great bleſſing, if you could perform it every day: if not endeavour to perform it at leaſt every *Sunday* and *Holyday*, on the days of confeſſion and communion, and alſo on ſome days before to prepare yourſelf for it, and ſome days after to preſerve the fruit of it; I moreover recommend it, on the days wherein you ſhall find yourſelf moved with temptations, that in this exerciſe you may find arms to defend yourſelf; according to that remarkable admonition of our Lord, *Watch ye and pray, that ye enter not into temptation**.

Make choice of a convenient place for meditation, that is removed from noiſe, and wherein you may be alone as much as poſſible, that you may thereby be leſs expoſed to diſtractions, and have more liberty to apply your mind and heart to God.

## ARTICLE XIII.

*General advice concerning Meditation.*

BEFORE the finiſhing of this treatiſe, there remains ſome advice to be given you, to obviate the difficulties which occur in this holy exerciſe, and to make it ſolidly advantageous to you.

*1ſt Advice. Be not prejudiced againſt meditation.*

The firſt is, that you diligently take care not to permit your mind to be prepoſſeſſed with any falſe opinion againſt meditation, as to conceive that you are not capable of meditating, or that it is too much trouble, not neceſſary, or the like.

This is the firſt obſtacle the Devil will put in your way to divert you entirely from this exerciſe; but we have already

* Mat. xxvi. 41.

already taken notice of this impediment, and have discovered the folly of that illusion, in the first eight articles; wherefore read them attentively. Especially as to your capacity, remember that it is not wit, nor sublime studies, which qualify you for meditating, but humility and the knowledge of your own inability to design or perform good actions, and a great desire to advance in virtue. These are the dispositions which render you capable of meditating, or rather of receiving the lights and motions of divine grace, which are the things we seek in meditation, and not our own imaginations.

*2d Advice. Be not dismayed with difficulties, which may occur in this exercise.*

The second advice is, not to be dismayed with the difficulties you may find in this exercise, as the trouble to apply your mind, distractions, disgust, and the like.

1. Represent to yourself that good things are not acquired without pains. What difficulties do we meet with in studies, and other exercises of human life, yet these do not make us desist?

2. Consider that all beginnings are difficult, and that by practice they are overcome, especially by the grace of God, which is the first mover to all good things, but particularly in this action, where it is the first and principal support.

3. Make these distractions serve for your meditation, and proceed in this manner. Humble yourself in the sight of God, because you cannot keep your mind attentive: acknowledge that it is through your fault; that your sins are the cause; that this springs from your lightness, and from too great an inclination to the vanities and pleasures of the world. Take from thence occasion to lament your sins, to implore pardon of God for them, to purpose to fly from them for the future, to correct the levity of your mind, and to redress your disorderly affections.

4. Among all these distractions, suppose yourself to be as a beggar at the gate of God, from whom you beg an alms. Does a beggar esteem himself repulsed, because he is not hearkened to at his first request? He continues soliciting, he waits, he comes again. Act you in that manner, persevere, humbly begging of God a good thought for your salvation. Although you should spend all the time of your meditation in this request, you will have done a great deal. Call to mind that excellent sentence of St. *Augustine**, who says, that "When God does not presently "grant

* Serm. 5. de Verb. Dom.

" grant the petition we desire, it is not because he refuses us, but " because he would have us set such a value on his favours as " they deserve; it being certain, that we esteem more the things " obtained with much trouble, and make less account of those ac- " quired without pains." For this reason he adds, " Ask, seek, " urge; God reserves the favour to grant it at the end, although " he would not consent to it at the first, that you might learn to " solicit for great things with an ardent desire."

5. On these occasions behave yourself like the poor *Cananean*, who gained by a wonderful patience the favour which the Son of God had refused her. This afflicted woman came, and cast herself at the feet of our Lord, to obtain the cure of her daughter tormented with an evil spirit. He passes on his way without answering her one word. She addresses herself to the Apostles, who intercede for her, but to no purpose. Seeing herself thus rejected she advances, and presents herself to him again with greater earnestness than before, O Lord, assist me! He answers roughly, *It is not good to take the bread of the children, and to cast it to the dogs* *. An answer sufficient to discourage the greatest patience. She, instead of being disheartened by it, takes advantage from his words, and makes use of them to obtain the effect of her prayer: Ah Lord! pardon me if I tell you, that sometimes bread is given to the dogs, for at least they are permitted to eat the crumbs which fall from their master's table: nor do I request any thing more than the remainder of the favours you shew your children. Our Lord was so well pleased with the faith, humility and patience of this afflicted person, that praising her highly, he said to her, *O woman, great is thy faith: be it done to thee as thou wilt* †.

Imitate in your prayer this admirable example, and still when you beg of God any grace for your salvation, although God answers you not by some good thoughts, continue intreating, *Lord help me* ‡. Have recourse to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin *Mary*, and of the saints, as the *Cananean* had to that of the Apostles. If, this coldness continuing, your conscience tell you, that your sins are the cause, and that they render you unworthy of the favours you request; acknowledge humbly the truth, and declaring that it is so, say from your heart as the *Cananean*, It is true, O God, it is not reasonable that thou shouldest give the bread of thy children to dogs, that is, to sinners such as I am; but at least, as the crumbs of bread which fall from the table are allowed to the dogs, deny

* Mat. xv. 26. † Mat. xv. 28. ‡ Mat. xv. 25.

deny me not those which fall from thine; grant me some small remainder of those abundant graces which thou poureſt upon those who faithfully ſerve thee. If you perſevere thus, God will grant your petition, and recompenſe your faith, your humility, and your patience. And although he ſhould not give you any ſentiments proper to the ſubject upon which you meditate, yet that patience, that humility, that ſtedfaſt faith which you exerciſe, will be more pleaſing to him than any thing elſe, and more profitable to you, and this will be the beſt fruit of your prayer. Thus, *Theotime*, you will loſe nothing, though God ſhould ſeem to refuſe the good thoughts you aſk of him. This denial will be abundantly recompenſed by the virtues you practiſe on the occaſion; for thoſe are God's gifts: thus it may be truly ſaid, that in ſeeking God at one time, you will find him at another; and you will experience the truth of that excellent obſervation made by the great St. *Bernard*, "That "among all the things we ſeek for, only God is never ſought for "in vain, even when we imagine we cannot find him *."

The third advice is, That in every meditation you ſtill be mindful of the end for which you meditate, which is the ſanctification of your ſoul, and to make you truly virtuous in the ſight of God; ſo that the meditation by which you do not advance in virtue, is not meditation nor prayer, but a ſpeculative ſtudy, which is ſometimes more prejudicial than profitable.

3*d Advice.* *Reflect on the end for which you meditate.*

The meditation which is performed without a view to this end, is attended with an infinite number of moſt dangerous defects. It makes us ſtop at the thoughts, and not proceed to affections; at curious ſpeculations, not ſolid; at thoſe which delight the mind, and not at thoſe which move the heart. If we paſs to affections, it is to thoſe which are found moſt agreeable, and not thoſe which are moſt neceſſary, ſuch as the hatred of ſin, the deſire of mortifying our paſſions, and correcting our vices. We content ourſelves with the affection, and omit the reſolutions; and if we proceed to reſolutions, we content ourſelves with general ones, without deſcending to particulars. For example, we ſay, I would be humble, chaſte, temperate; but we do not ſay, I will be humble on this or that occaſion; I will obey when I ſhall be commanded; I will acknowledge my fault when I ſhall be reprehended, and other like; I will be chaſte by reſiſting temptations,



* L. 5. de Conſideratione c. 11.

through such and such means; I will avoid such occasions, which are dangerous; I will shun idleness, &c. And if we come to some particular resolutions, we make them but faintly, and not firmly and vigorously; from whence it comes to pass that we never accomplish them, and so they are as unprofitable as if they were not made at all.

All these faults in meditation arise from our not seriously proposing to ourselves the sanctification of our soul, by the solid practice of virtue.

From hence it comes, that this manner of meditation prejudices more than it profits, because it is apt to give those who act thus, a very good opinion of themselves, a contempt of others, and a confidence in their own merits: it makes them much addicted to their own judgment and will, and believe they are saints by meditating on holy things, although they practise them not; which is a very great mischief, not only to them, but to others, who take from thence an occasion to blame meditation and devotion, which are not the cause of these disorders, but the ill use these persons make of them.

For this reason, *Theotime*, when you apply yourself to this holy exercise, seriously propose virtue as its end; and believe that meditation unprofitable, from which you depart without a particular resolution of correcting yourself, and of loving God more than you have yet done.

*4th Advice. By meditation strive to acquire the virtues most necessary for your present state.*

But it is not sufficient to refer meditation to the practice of virtue, we must also be careful to refer it to the practice of the most solid virtues, as faith, humility, the love of God and our neighbour, chastity, temperance, and others, especially those which are most necessary, in the present state wherein we find ourselves, and of which we stand most frequently in need.

This advice is one of the most important which can be given in this matter; for to what purpose is it to propose to ourselves in meditation fair and apparent virtues, and in the mean time omit the more solid, which are the groundwork and foundation of all others, and which making less shew, are notwithstanding more necessary? To what end, for example, do we propose to ourselves to be very liberal to the poor, if we had it in our power; to suffer great persecutions for God's sake, if they should befall us; with other like things, and neglect the virtues we stand in present want of,

of, as chaſtity, humility, meekneſs towards our neighbour, or thoſe we have every day occaſion to practiſe, as the mortifying of our paſſions, reſtraining of our anger, ſuffering at the hands of others, and obedience to our ſuperiors?

In a word, meditation is a means of ſanctifying our ſouls. This ſanctification conſiſts in moderating our paſſions, correcting our vices, and by conſequence, in acquiring the contrary virtues: it ought therefore to be neceſſarily referred to that end, and to produce that effect; otherwiſe it is not a meditation, but a mere illuſion: and thoſe who employ it thus, abuſe the moſt holy and wholſome thing, which they render unprofitable to themſelves, and contemptible to others.

Act not in this manner, *Theotime;* meditate in order to ſanctify your ſoul, to mortify your paſſions, to correct the vices which reign in you, to practiſe true and ſolid virtues, and thoſe you ſtand moſt in need of in your preſent ſtate.

This is what I had to propoſe to you upon this ſubject of meditation. To conclude, I have but two words to ſay to you, *Read* and *practiſe*. Read, to inſtruct yourſelf in a thing which yet you know not, to convince yourſelf that meditation is not ſo difficult as you might conceive it, but that you may practiſe it, and that it may be very beneficial to you. Read, to learn the method of it, and practiſe the ſame. But content not yourſelf with the reading, proceed to the practice and exerciſe of ſo pious a thing. Try what you can do therein, or rather what God will give you the grace to perform: be aſſured his aſſiſtance will be great, if you approach him with a ſincere intention to pleaſe him, and to learn in that divine ſchool the truths of your ſalvation, and to practiſe them faithfully. Be not diſmayed at the difficulties; be faithful and perſeverant, and God will beſtow upon you the means of ſurmounting them. Call to mind that ſentence of the prophet, That *the Lord is good to them that hope in him, to the ſoul that ſeeketh him**. Seek after him in your prayers and meditations, and you will find him, if you ſearch faithfully. *Aſk, and it ſhall be given you: ſeek, and you ſhall find: knock, and it ſhall be opened to you*†. *O taſte,* Theotime, *and ſee that the Lord is ſweet*‡, in this pious exerciſe, and you will find by experience, and in effect, the truth of that ſentence of the divine wiſdom: *Bleſſed is the man that heareth me, and that watcheth*

*Concluſion.*

* Lam. iii. 25. † Mat. vii. 7. ‡ Pſ. xxxiii. 9.

*watcheth daily at my gates, and waiteth at the posts of my doors. He that shall find me, shall find life, and shall have salvation from the Lord**.

* Prov. viii. 34, 35.

*FINIS.*

## Errors of the Preſs.

### VOL. I.

Page 5, Line 4, *read* youth, if—*ibid.* l. 23, *r.* the power—p. 6, l. 11, *r. poured—ib.* l. 16, *r.* 3. He—p. 12 in margin, *r.* Job xxix. 2.—p. 40, l. 11, *r.* denſe obſcurity—p. 50, in margin, for xxii, *r.* 22—p. 77, in margin, *r.* Pſalm cxviii. 73—p. 84, l. 27, in margin, dele *the whole human race*—p. 99, l. 10, for *The book*, &c. *r.* The holy ſcripture in many places, but chiefly in the book—p. 152, l. 23, dele nor—p. 207, l. 10, *r.* young perſons engage—p. 208, l. 9, *r.* important an.

### VOL. II.

Page 8, Line 29, *read laugh at*—p. 62, l. laſt but one, for *for*, *r.* yet—p. 133, l. 2, *r.* they would—p. 168, l. 5, *r.* which are duly propoſed—p. 186, l. 21, *r.* ſpiritual blindneſs—p. 207, l. 4, *r.* that bleſſed—p. 216, in margin, *r.* § S. Ber. ibid.—p. 219, l. 20, *r.* thy humanity.—p. 233, l. 11, *r.* repent of our ſins—p. 246, l. 18, *r.* at leaſt.

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